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ABSTRACT

The cultural values of Hmong parents in the Hmong community of Spokane (Washington) are described and interpreted. The perceptions of Hmong refugee mothers and fathers resettled in the United States are examined with regard to the family and their roles as parents. The cultural values of the Laotian Hmong are also examined prior to and during the Laotian Civil War, with an emphasis on the cultural patterns vested in the Hmong family. Approximately 70 families and 400 individuals made up Spokane's Hmong community in 1989. More than 30 parents responded to a survey about parenting. Parent values in this community vary by education level, fluency in English, and age, with the oldest parents the most traditional, and the youngest parents the most acculturated. Lack of financial resources is an overriding problem for the Hmong, complicated by cultural changes brought on by immigration, such as less child-rearing assistance than the traditional family provided. The expectations of Hmong parents differ from those of Anglo-American parents, particularly in areas of sex role and children's respect toward parents. The Hmong frequently believe in corporal punishment, but there is evidence that some Hmong parents are changing their parenting styles as they and their children adjust to the United States. Appendix A contains the parent survey in English and Hmong, and Appendix B discusses some Hmong concepts and traditions. (Contains 107 references.) (SLD)

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HMONG CONCEPTS OF PARENTHOOD AND THE FAMILY IN THE UNITED STATES

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By

MARY KATHERINE HUGHES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Anthropology

DECEMBER 1990

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of MARY KATHERINE HUGHES find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Linda Stone
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HMONG CONCEPTS OF PARENTHOOD AND THE FAMILY

IN THE UNITED STATES

Abstract

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December 1990

Chair: Linda S. Stone

This study will describe and interpret the cultural values of Hmong parents in the Hmong community of Spokane, Washington. It examines the perceptions that Hmong refugee mothers and fathers resettled in the United States have of the family and of their roles as parents. It also examines the cultural values of the Laotian Hmong society prior to and during the Laotian Civil War, particularly the cultural patterns vested in the Hmong family. The primary aim is to describe the Hmong concept of parenthood and the family from the point of view of Hmong refugee parents, to describe what they consider to be the most pressing problems facing their families, and to interpret Hmong parenting behaviors as they relate to parent education programs that are interventionary in nature.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

Spokane, a city of about 200,000 people in eastern Washington, is one of about 75 communities in the United States that has been host to a Hmong refugee population since the mid-1970s. In the early 1980s Spokane had a Hmong population close to 2000; however, the majority of the Spokane Hmong refugee community migrated to California when federal guidelines cut the length of time for which refugees would be eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) from 36 to 18 months. RCA is a federal public assistance program designed to provide assistance to refugees since they arrive in the United States with almost no material possessions[1]. Since the early 1980s, the Spokane Hmong population has been approximately 400. Considering its small size, Spokane has numerous programs providing services to its Hmong refugee community when compared with services offered in other communities with Hmong populations of comparable size. This is probably due to the fact that programs emerged when the Spokane Hmong community was considerably larger.

There are two refugee resettlement agencies that hold contracts with the Department of State that entitle them to resettle Hmong families to Spokane from refugee camps in Thailand. Refugee mutual assistance associations have provided social services to refugees in Spokane as has the Department of Social and Health Services, which has employed refugee caseworkers whose caseloads are made up entirely of refugees. Spokane Community Mental Health has also employed ethnic and refugee caseworkers. The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program has offered instruction to refugee parents through the use of translators on certain days of the week. The Adult Education Center and the Head Start program located there provide English instruction and daycare to much of the Spokane refugee population as do several church-affiliated schools. Social service agencies have also received funding for home-tutoring English programs and various types of vocational training programs, such as electronic assembly, sewing, and driver's education.

In recent years there have been programs designed to provide educational services to Hmong parents that espouse a social pathology model of behavior (commonly referred to as the "deficit model") as justification for early childhood intervention. Social scientists Joan and Stephen Baratz (1972) aptly describe the social pathology model as "institutional racism", based on its application with blacks in early childhood intervention programs of the 1960's. According to the Baratz;

> "Liberals have eagerly seized upon the social pathology model as a replacement for the genetic inferiority model. But both the genetic model and the social pathology model postulate that something is wrong with the black American. For the traditional racists, that something is transmitted by the genetic code; for the ethnocentric social pathologists, that something is transmitted by the family. The major difference between the genetic model and the social pathology model lies in the

> attribution of causality, not in the behaviors observed as sick, pathological, deviant, or underdeveloped" (1972:189).

Essentially, the assumption of this model is that to be different from middle class Anglo-Americans is to be inferior. According to the Baratz', the model derives from social science research which measures blacks' behavior against an idealized norm of "American behavior", which

> "is defined operationally...[as] the way white middle-class America is supposed to behave...[The social scientist ends up]...describing Negro behavior not as it is, but rather as it deviates from the normative system defined by the white middle class" (1972:189).

The logic of intervention programs based on this model, then, calls for changing the patterns of child-rearing in the "deficient" home environment. As Hmong parents participate in such programs they are increasingly coming into contact with pressure to modify their parenting behavior and attitudes towards middle class Anglo-American norms.

It is my contention that the justification for intervention--"deficient" home environments, for which the parents' behavior is blamed--has changed little since the 1960's. While the biases in parent education programs of the late 1980's may have become more implicit, they still persist, as discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

This study of the Hmong concept of parenthood and the family developed out of my realization that middle class Anglo-Americans interacting with Hmong parents assume, at the very least, that the Hmong hold notions of parenthood identical to their own and, more commonly, judge the behavior of Hmong parents against an idealized norm of middle-class Anglo-American parenting behavior[2]. I argue that it should not be the job of parent educators to pressure Hmong (nor other minority culture) parents to modify their parenting behavior and attitudes towards middle-class Anglo-American norms. However, their job should include educating themselves about the Hmong (and other minority culture's) concept of parenthood and the family.

There have been numerous studies undertaken of various problems Hmong refugees face in their resettlement to the United States, which complement the ethnographic accounts of the Hmong in Southeast Asia and China that have been produced in the last fifty years. However, neither the description of parenting values of Hmong refugees in the United States nor their reflection in the behavior and interests of Hmong parents as related to parent education programs interventionary in nature, has received much attention. There appear to be no published studies examining Hmong parenting values from parents' perspectives as they are relevant to interventionary parent education programs. I found one study, Steve Smoot's unpublished master's thesis, which focussed on only the child-rearing aspects of parenthood, and the Hmong conception of the "ideal" child. (Smoot's thesis is discussed in more detail in the "Review of the Literature" section of this chapter.)

Few studies of the Hmong have included a majority of female informants. Most of the published studies rely solely or heavily on

male informants. In addition, many of the studies interpret Hmong cultural values from within the framework of Euro-American values or evolve out of theoretical frameworks that assume that the Hmong must, inevitably, give up their cultural values and become assimilated into the majority Anglo-American culture. Also, while numerous published studies have documented the problems of the Hmong in larger U.S. Hmong communities, there has been considerably less literature discussing problems in the smaller, more isolated Hmong communities, and no published literature on the Spokane Hmong community. Finally, studies of the Hmong tend to generalize their findings from one community to the entire U.S. Hmong population.

The purpose of this study is to describe and interpret the cultural values of Hmong parents in the Spokane Hmong community. It examines the perceptions that Hmong refugee mothers and fathers resettled in the United States have of the family and of their roles as parents. It also examines cultural values of the Laotian Hmong society prior to and during the Laotian Civil War, particularly the cultural patterns vested in the Hmong family. The primary aim is to describe the Hmong concept of parenthood and the family from the point of view of Hmong refugee parents, to describe what they consider to be the most pressing problems facing their families, and to interpret Hmong parenting behaviors as they relate to parent education programs that are interventionary in nature. Too often, social policy and program administrators use the information that anthropologists provide about minority cultures to attempt to modify the behavior of members of the minority cultures so that their behavior is more in line with the dominant culture's norms. Too often, members of the dominant Anglo-American culture plan programs intended to assist or "reform" the Hmong without understanding who the Hmong are and without obtaining input from the Hmong who will be affected by the programs. The Hmong cultural information is presented in this study for planners, administrators, educators, and others involved in programs serving both Hmong parents and their children in the hopes that they will better understand the problems that Hmong parents in Spokane face and that they will use this information to tailor their programs to meet the needs of the Hmong family as the Hmong define them. Rather than using this information to determine how to better adapt Hmong parents' values to those of Anglo-American parents, and expecting Hmong parents to give up their cultural values, I would hope that Anglo-Americans would respect their differences and even learn from them.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

GENERAL ETHNOGRAPHIC WORKS ON THE HMONG

A search of the published literature on the Hmong culture yielded a number of ethnographic studies of various Hmong groups in Southeast Asia and China. Some of these are studies which analyzed the traditional Hmong subsistence economy in Southeast Asia and changes in it as a result of development projects (Bernatzik 1970; Mickey 1947; Graham 1954; Its 1960; Ruey 1960; LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave 1964; Barney 1967; Lemoine 1972; Yang 1975; Geddes 1976; Cooper 1984; Lee 1981, 1985,

1986). Some are histories of the Hmong (Savina 1924; Mottin 1980; Quincy 1988). Some of the studies described the structure of the Hmong family, though none undertook a description of Hmong parenting values from the Hmong parents' perspective. The rest of this section presents a discussion of those ethnographic sources that deal with the Hmong family and those that were important in providing historical information about the Hmong.

In the years 1936-1937 the German anthropologist Hugo Bernatzik and his wife made an ethnographic expedition to study the Hmong and the Akha of Thailand. He reported his and his wife's findings in Akha and Meau, a two volume ethnography extensively discussing the history, social and political organization, laws, medicine and subsistence patterns of the two tribes. Bernatzik's work is one of the most comprehensive ethnographic studies of the Hmong in Thailand.

French anthropologist, Jacques Lemoine, wrote an ethnographic work almost as comprehensive as Bernatzik's based on his stay in a Hmong village in Laos in the years 1964-1967. Lemoine's work focussed on a Hmong village that was predominantly "Hmoob Ntsuab" (Green Hmong), while Bernatzik's work was with a group of "Hmoob Dawb" (White Hmong). (The colors refer to differences in the women's traditional dress; the two groups speak mutually intelligible dialects of the Hmong language. In Laos and Thailand, there were three Hmong groups: the two mentioned above and the "Hmoob Txaij Npab" [Striped-armed Hmong] [Lemoine 1972; Young 1962].) Lemoine describes in some detail the Hmong language, the environment and the social structure in his work. The village where Lemoine did his research was located in Saiyaboury, the only Laotian province west of the Mekong River. He wrote that when he conducted his research, a large portion of the province was uninhabited, thus, groups of refugees fleeing the combat zones of the Laotian Civil War regrouped there (Lemoine 1972:29). In fact, that was the only mention I found in Lemoine's book of the Laotian Civil War which was going on at the time.

Robert Cooper conducted anthropological fieldwork for his doctoral dissertation in a Hmong village in Northern Thailand in the years 1973-1975 and again in 1978, which became the basis for his book, Resource Scarcity and the Hmong Response. He examines social structure, settlement patterns, history and law, in terms of their relationship to slash and burn subsistence agriculture. His study focussed on "social and economic changes that a swidden [agriculturalist] community undergoes in the face of resource scarcity" (Cooper 1984:1).

French missionary priest Father F.M. Savina published the first Hmong history in 1924. Because he found the presence of Caucasian traits (light complexions, light or dark brown, red or "corn-silk blond" hair) in the Hmong, and the presence of legends that he linked to Biblical history, Savina decided that the Hmong were descendants of a people who once inhabited the Iranian plateau. He traced what he thought to be their migration path that led them to China and discussed references to the Hmong in Chinese historical records. Savina's account is dated, but includes many interesting points.

In 1988 American political philosopher Keith Quincy published, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive history of the Hmong in the English language. He undertook the task of writing a Hmong history with the

assistance of a Hmong refugee, See Vue, who arranged numerous interviews with Hmong elders residing in the United States. Quincy's book recounts Hmong history as the Hmong themselves have passed it on orally, examines Savina's interpretation of Hmong history and corrobates historical documents with the Hmong oral history wherever they exist. The book was written for a general audience, the American public and the children of Laotion Hmong who have resettled in the United States (Quincy 1988: vii). Unfortunately, the book contains no footnotes and sources of some of the information Quincy provides is unclear. As the SARS Newsletter noted, "Controversies over some political movements are aired, while other portions of history are told consistently from one perspective" (SARS Newsletter, Fall 1988, v.8, no.4, p.2).

WORKS ON HMONG REFUGEES IN THE UNITED STATES

Another set of published and unpublished materials scattered across many disciplines exists on Hmong refugees in the United States as research on refugees has become a rich interdisciplinary field of study[3].

Refugee studies have examined medical and health care issues, language learning issues, the breakdown of the traditional political structure, the modification of the traditional social structure, issues relating to changing concepts of gender, traditional healing practices, conversion to Christianity and its effects, marriage negotiations, and traditional needlework as well as other topics. A large number of studies are unpublished master's theses and doctoral dissertations or papers presented at professional conferences. Other than Steve Smoot's unpublished master's thesis (Smoot, 1985), I have found no studies that focussed specifically on parenting values of the Hmong in the United States.

Smoot focussed on the child-rearing expecations of Hmong refugee parents and on their conception of the ideal child. A secondary focus of his study was the comparison of expectations of mothers who were single heads of households with mothers who were not single heads of households aimed at detecting changes in child-rearing values. Smoot relied heavily on data that resulted from the rankings parents gave to a set of 12 values, which Smoot judged to be at the core of the Hmong child-rearing orientation and from his adaptation of a projective test developed by psychologists Rothbart and Maccoby (1966), which involved recording parents' reactions to the taped voice of a six-year-old child as that child sought attention, help, comfort, etc. William Lambert, Josie Hamers, and Nancy Frasure-Smith, a group of psychologists and psycholinguists from McGill University in Quebec, previously adapted the taped voice test in their cross-national study of the child-rearing values in parents from France, England, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Japan, as well as from parents in Canada who were immigrants from those countries and parents who were born in Canada (Lambert, Hamers, and Frasure-Smith 1979). In many ways, Smoot's study parallels the study done by Lambert and his colleagues. Having observed the difficulties that illiterate and semi-literate parents had responding to the written data-collection instrument used in my own study leads me to

question the validity of the parents' rankings of Smoot's 12 core values. Nonetheless, Smoot's work was an interesting earlier study that initiated an examination of Hmong cultural values pertaining to child rearing, yet raises further questions as to Hmong parents' concept of parenthood and of the family, and as to how those notions translate into behaviors.

Professors William Meredith and George Rowe of the University of Nebraska administered a survey to the Hmong population of Omaha, Nebraska aged 16 years and older (134 respondents, of which 70 were female and 64 were male) to measure "changes in marital and family life attitudes" (1986:124). Their survey contained twenty-six statements divided into the topical areas of "mate selection", "marriage preparation", "marriage roles", and "divorce". The survey included both statements that reflected values commonly held by the Hmong and ones commonly held by Americans. To measure changes in attitude over time, Meredith and Rowe asked survey respondents to record "what they remembered their attitude toward the statement to have been in Laos and their attitude toward the statement at the time of the survey" (1986:125). Meredith and Rowe designed their survey specifically for illiterate Hmong refugees. Each respondent was given an answer sheet where pictures were substituted for statement numbers and a Faces scale corresponded directly to a rating level on a Likert Scale (strongly agree, mostly agree, not sure, mostly disagree, strongly disagree). The survey statements were read aloud (in Hmong) to the respondents by native speakers of Hmong.

The results of their survey indicated significant changes in attitudes regarding polygynous marriage, the bride price, age of marriage, and general views on equality within marriage. Meredith and Rowe reported that the changes had "departed from the culturally prevalent views held by the Hmong in Laos toward views more accepted in this country. They found that "the means...of selecting a spouse, the use of go-betweens to negotiate the marriage settlement and...attitudes on the proper roles of husbands and wives had changed little" (1986:129). They also found that

> "women, in general, were more traditional and also gave greater support to authority than did men...Men were significantly more agreeable to...[the] prospect [of women working outside the home]...than were their wives...Men were unsure in attitudes [concerning divorce]" (1986:129).

Meredith and Rowe concluded that "with the exception...[of attitudes towards polygyny]...increased levels of education appeared to facilitate changes toward Western ideas" (1986:129).

Because of the difficulties I observed that illiterate and semi-literate parents had responding to the survey used in my own study modeled after Meredith and Rowe's and for other reasons discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, I question the validity of the findings of Meredith and Rowe. While I find the unique approach they took in designing a survey instrument for a non-literate population to be of value, I feel that a discussion of the respondents' actual experience

with the instrument is needed to demonstrate the validity of the data collected.

Nancy Donnelly conducted a recent anthropological study in the Hmong community of Seattle, Washington. Her work focussed on gender relations in Hmong culture. She described the Hmong culture of gender in Southeast Asia and analyzed how Hmong women's lives are changing in the areas of gender relations, courtship and marriage. She examines marriage events and cases of domestic conflict in the United States. She found that "In general, incoming Hmong refugees do not seek new lives, they seek the same lives in a new location, and where possible they use their new opportunities to bolster pre-existing social conceptions" (Donnelly 1989:184). Her work provides a good background for understanding parental values of the Hmong.

Kristen Monzel's 1987 master's thesis examined acculturation, satisfaction levels of the Hmong community in the Denver-Boulder, Colorado area. Monzel noted that while kinship ties were observed to be strong, "extended families did not necessarily desire to live together" (1987:115). She also noted generational differences in levels of acculturation. She found informants aged thirty to thirty-nine years and with no formal education to be the least acculturated, while, not surprisingly, those with some United States high schooling and those under thirty years of age were the most acculturated (1987:93, 116-117). Monzel's acculturation index was a combination of the variables of language spoken most often at home, preferred type of food, most often consumed food, television ownership, automobile ownership, driver's license possession, religion practiced, number of American friends, English skills, and whether or not they would allow their children to marry non-Hmong (1987:92). Monzel attributed the difficulties of adjusting to life in the United States among the thirty to thirty-nine-year-old age group to living in nuclear family patterns of residence, stating that this "perhaps...led to fewer adult ties into the local network per household" (1987:118).

In 1985 Kent Bishop's dissertation, Family Structure of Central California Hmong analyzed changes in the Hmong family structure after resettlement in the United States. Bishop examined changes in the area of specific roles of family members and in family structure. In concluding his data analysis, Bishop states that "old rules and norms exist but are hollow and without purpose or authority" (1985:145). While I found that changes are occurring in Hmong family structure and in the roles of family members, I did not find an utter breakdown of the Hmong family structure as he implies has occurred. The editors of the SARS Newsletter remarked that "While most of Bishop's observations appear accurate, he generalizes to arrive at conclusions that do not always seem to describe the larger Hmong community, perhaps because of overreliance on...Americanized sources" (SARS Newsletter, Winter 1989, v.9, n.1, p.2).

EDUCATIONAL STUDIES RELATED TO HMONG YOUTH

There have been some studies conducted on generational differences between Hmong parents and their children. The focus of most of those studies has been on education and its role in the assimilation process

of these youth, and many of the ethnographic studies have expressed the youths' perspectives.

Beth Goldstein conducted an ethnographic study of two high schools and one Hmong community in Wisconsin for her doctoral dissertation in 1985. Her study examined dynamics of schooling and ethnicity in relation to the resettlement of immigrant youth. Goldstein found that

> "Hmong high school girls had learned that schooling did not necessarily lead to their acceptance into American society...Girls who accepted the responsibility for ethnic identity maintenance through a commitment to the domestic sphere and child-rearing saw themselves as choosing their families instead of school. Girls who dropped out of school for domestic reasons received community support for moving into a valued gender role" (1986:19).

The boys in Goldstein's study "wanted to learn to 'pass' as Americans without necessarily seeking primary integration in American social spheres. Many sought to learn technological skills with views toward that training's practical application in rebuilding Laos" (1986:12). Goldstein's study provides some very useful insights from the perspective of the high-school-age Hmong youth.

Joan Strouse's doctoral dissertation in 1985 discussed American immigration policy with respect to the Hmong. In it she indicates failure of schools to reach across the cultural gap and insensitivity to the poverty of the students. She asserts that Hmong students are pressured to forsake their old culture and adopt mainstream American cultural values. In a 1986 article that summarizes her dissertation findings, Strouse states that "despite much of the official rhetoric, Anglo-conformity remains the effective policy of almost all of this country's public schools..." (1986:112). She recommends that school systems reorient themselves toward true cultural pluralism--"the possibility of a nation of co-existing, mutually enriching diverse cultures is an alternative that must be seriously considered" (1986:112).

STUDIES OF THE CONCEPT OF PARENTHOOD FROM ANTHROPOLOGY

Surprisingly, a review of the anthropological literature revealed few studies that examined the concept of parenthood as defined in this study (husband's and wife's roles and child-rearing values). To my knowledge, the concept of parenthood has not been the sole focus of any significant anthropological work, however, certain aspects of the concept are regularly included in traditional ethnographic descriptions. Ethnographies usually discuss the child-rearing practices, education and discipline of children. Marriage role expectations are sometimes discussed under the topic "division of labor". The child-rearing practices of various Native American Indian groups were observed and have been described by anthropologists, missionaries and white fur traders. Clark Wissler (1934, 1957), Robert Lowie (1935, 1954), and Edwin Denig (1967) observed and described marriage role expectations and child-rearing practices of various groups of Plains Indians in the

nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries. John Ewers (1958) described marriage role expectations and child-rearing practices of Blackfoot. It was interesting to note that there exist striking similarities between traditional Hmong marriage roles and child-rearing practices and those of the Plains Indians (particularly those of the Blackfoot) as described in the ethnographic literature. A few examples of similarities are the custom of it being the mother's responsibility to train daughters and the father's to train sons (Ewers 1958), the levirate marriage practice custom being common but not obligatory (Lowie 1935, 1954), and husbands' and wives' respective duties as a couple being defined by a culturally-defined division of labor (Wissler 1957; Lowie 1935, 1954).

Child-rearing practices have been of interest to anthropologists in the field of personality and culture because they believe that adult personality is shaped by early childhood experiences (Haviland 1982:330). Anthropologists John and Beatrice Whiting and psychologist Irvin Child pioneered in the area of cross-cultural research on child-rearing practices. The Whitings and Herbert Barry, Irvin Child, and Margaret Bacon (1959) found correlations between patterns of child-rearing and other aspects of culture, such as economic structure.

Anthropologist Robert LeVine has also conducted cross-cultural research on child-rearing patterns. In 1988, he put forth a cultural evolutionary model of parental behavior that assumes that each major type of human socioeconomic adapation (foraging, agrarian, urban-industrial) has an optimal parent investment strategy associated with it. Agrarian parental strategies emphasize high fertility as a primary goal, with decreasing maternal attention as the child's survival becomes more certain. LeVine refers to this pattern as a "low-intensity" and "quantitative" pattern of childcare because it requires a decreasing amount of maternal attention as a child's growth provides confidence of her/his survival, the cost of each child to parents in terms of domestic resources is low, and the demand for children is high. Urban-industrial parental strategies, on the other hand, emphasize low fertility and a large commitment of parental attention and domestic resources over a longer period of time. LeVine refers to this latter strategy as a "high-intensity" and "qualitative" pattern of childcare because the demand for parental time, energy, and attention increases over time, the cost of each child to parents in terms of domestic resources is high, and the demand for children is low (1988:6-8). LeVine acknowledges that

> "these formulas do not provide the specific contents of parental attitudes and behavior" (LeVine 1988:8).

> "Each culture, drawing on its own symbolic traditons, supplies models for parental behavior that, when implemented under local conditions, become culture-specific styles of parental commitment" (LeVine and White 1987:289-291).

LeVine also acknowledges that "the impact of rapid social change...raise[s] problems for the agrarian model" (1988:10).

The most obvious problem of LeVine's model is that it assumes homogeneity in cultures. Particularly, the urban-industrial parental is largely based on middle-class Anglo-American parenting values. Another weakness is that in cases where parental behavior obviously varies from his "agrarian parental strategies", which seem to be a majority of cases, LeVine explains that "[the variation] seems to be a function of particular cultural and ideological traditions" (1988:11). In other words, what LeVine's cultural evolutionary model cannot explain, "particular cultural and ideological traditions" must. One finishes reading his model and feels that s/he is still where s/he was at the beginning. Also, LeVine's use of the value-laden terms "qualitative" and "quantitative" to describe the two parental strategies would inevitably prejudice Westerners' perceptions of them.

Anthropologists conducting national character studies, such as Margaret Mead (1959) have attempted to determine the child-rearing practices and education which shape "national personality types". These studies have come under extensive criticism because they have tended to rely heavily on unscientific and overgeneralized data and they have tended to be highly subjective (Haviland 1982:348).

CHILD-REARING STUDIES

Since the early-1950s when John Whiting and Irving Child published their book Child Training and Personality, psychologists and other social scientists have conducted numerous studies that attempt to test the cross-cultural validity of psychological theories related to child-training and child and personality development (Bock 1980:144). The tests these cross-cultural studies use have been designed for and by white Europeans or Americans with minor modifications made for use with ethnic groups in the United States, African pastoralists or other tribal or peasant groups residing in other countries[4]. The assumption that projective tests developed in one society can be used with only minor modifications to make valid inferences about other cultures and the universality of certain hypotheses has been widely criticized (Lindesmith and Strauss 1950; Henry and Spiro 1953; Kaplan 1961; Ainsworth 1977; Goldberg 1977; Bock 1980), yet social scientists and psychologists continue to find a place for them in their studies (see Strom and Hill 1979; Strom, Griswold, and Slaughter 1981; Strom, Daniels, Wurster, Betz, Graf, and Jansen 1986).

Since the 1960's, partially as a response to criticisms of projective tests used by the cross-cultural approach, numerous studies have been done based on intensive observation of the behavior of children in naturalistic settings (Bock 1980:207). John and Beatrice Whiting's Six Cultures Project in the 1960's kicked off a new wave of child-family studies based on firsthand research (Whiting 1963; Minturn and Lambert 1964; Whiting and Whiting 1974; Vogt and Albert 1966).

One branch of this wave has been studies of mother-infant interactions. These studies often focus on very specific behavior patterns, such as the number of times the mother looks at the baby, the baby looks at the mother, or the two make eye contact (Klein, Lasky, Yarbrough, Habicht, and Sellers 1977; Goldberg 1977; Lusk and Lewis

1970; Lewis and Ban 1977). Those studies examine much more specific behavior patterns than I attempt to describe in this study. However, a study done by Oberg, Muret-Wagstaff, Moore, and Cumming (1986) is of interest because it included Hmong mothers and infants in the United States. Findings of that study indicated that the Hmong mothers studied were more attentive, expressive, sensitive, responsive and patient in the child-rearing process than the Caucasian mothers in the study. (All families in the study were of low socio-economic status.) Also, the Hmong mothers had fewer incidents of accidents or ingestions requiring them to bring their infants to emergency rooms than the Caucasian mothers. Oberg his colleagues attributed the positive traits in the Hmong mothers to support from the extended family and "a cultural priority for attentive child-rearing" (Oberg, Muret-Wagstaff, Moore, and Cumming 1986:413). In a later article, Muret-Wagstaff and Moore (1989) reported that,

> "Members of the extended family...provided not only emotional support but also direct, culturally distinct information and feedback, as well as assistance related to infant caretaking. Family members not only supported the mother's ministrations but actively soothed, fed, and otherwise cared for babies in the same sensitive fashion as mothers. Maternal responsiveness to newborn infants' cues among the Hmong showed strong resilience despite stress which seemed at least equal to that of their American counterparts" (1989:336).

The significant finding of Oberg and his colleagues' study in my opinion was that it noted the importance of the role of the extended family in the parenting experience.

Oberg and his colleagues cited another study done on Hmong mother and infant interactions. Newlin-Haus' doctoral dissertation compared ten- to twelve-month-old Hmong infants with those of white middle class American families and found that "Hmong mothers held and touched their infants more frequently and were more extensively comforting and consoling, while American Caucasian mothers, although attentive, playful and vocal, were often inclined to interrupt the baby's activities and lived in object-filled rather than people-filled environments" (Newlin-Haus 1982, cited in Oberg, Muret-Wagstaff, Moore, and Cumming 1986:412).

PARENTING AND FAMILY VALUES IN ACCULTURATION STUDIES

Acculturation studies have sometimes examined the traditonal cultural values, marriage roles and child-rearing practices of refugee and immigrant groups in the United States. Many of the early works, which focus on immigrant groups, use their findings to support assimilation theory (the notion that the immigrant groups must conform to the dominant Anglo culture).

One of the earlier studies that emphasized the importance of cultural backgrounds in understanding the assimilation process was that of Duncan (1933), Immigration and Assimilation. Book I of his study

provides a historical, social, economic and political background of nearly every nation from which U.S. immigrants have originated. In Book II, Duncan discusses the major problems of first, second and third generation immigrant Americans using life histories extensively to illustrate his points. The life histories reflect the extent to which immigrant Americans perceived "assimilation" to have occurred, and also reflect a large variation in responses to the new environment. After 57 years, Duncan's book still provides very interesting reading.

An earlier work was that of William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918-1920). They published five volumes on the Polish peasant from 1918-1920. In 1984, Eli Zaretsky (1984) edited and abridged the five-volume work. Thomas and Znaniecki's work examines the disintegration of solidarity in the Polish peasant family after emigration to Polish cities, Germany and to the United States. Thomas, a sociologist at the University of Chicago, had received $50,000 "to study an immigrant group in Europe and America to determine as far as possible what relation their home mores and norms had to their adjustment and maladjustment in America" (Thomas, cited in Zaretsky 1984:9). Znaniecki was a Polish scholar whom Thomas met in Warsaw. He came to Chicago to work as Thomas' translator and later became a professor of sociology at the University of Illinois. The work pioneered in the effort to trace the subjective experience of an immigrant group in America. By including private letters, an autobiography, and life history documents of Polish immigrants in America, Thomas and Znaniecki established the use of such documents as a legitimate way to document subjective experience in sociological studies.

Leonard Covello (1972) conducted a study of southern Italian family mores and their effect on the school situation for Italian immigrant children in New York City in the 1930's and 1940's. Covello's dissertation took ten years to prepare (Covello 1972:IV) and was more comprehensive in nature than the study I undertook. He made extensive recommendations, based on his experience as principal of a high school in East Harlem where numerous Italian immigrants' children attended, so that schools might become successful agencies of assimilation (1972:447). The part of his dissertation that dealt with a description of the southern Italian family mores was very similar to the work I undertake in this thesis.

Liem Nguyen and Alan Henkin (1983) conducted a survey of 332 male and female Vietnamese and Lao adults residing in an area of the Southwest with high density populations of Indochinese refugees. The aim of the survey was to discover refugees' perceptions of the cultural and behavioral changes they had undergone since coming to the United States. Nguyen and Henkin's results indicated that both Vietnamese and Lao subjects perceived "critical changes in behavioral patterns and cultural values within a period of time after resettlement in the United States" (1983:156). The refugees surveyed appeared to feel that "the material aspect of their lives...[was] most satisfying...[while they perceived] their spiritual lives and social status...less positively" (1983:161). Most of the refugees surveyed "agree[d] that children should learn their home language and about the home culture...[and]

wish[ed] to maintain their distinctiveness in the host country" (1983:168). Nguyen and Henkins did not assert the representativeness of their sample (1983:157).

Paul Strand and Woodrow Jones, Jr. (1985) conducted a needs assessment survey of Hmong, Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese refugees in San Diego, California. They ranked their top three problems as lack of money and vocational training, lack of help finding jobs and lack of English skills.

In 1955, Melford Spiro surveyed the literature on American ethnic groups that dealt with either the cultures or the acculturation of those groups. He was able to find less than thirty publications written by anthropologists. While anthropologists have not shown much interest in studying ethnic and immigrant groups in the United States, non-anthropologists have conducted the best "anthropological" research in this field (Spiro 1955). Spiro found that, based on the studies that examined family structure,

> "With the inclusion of the immigrant family in the social system of the larger community, the parents have had to abdicate some aspects of their former educational, economic, and recreational roles. This, in turn, has led to a serious diminution in their authority...If, as is usually the case, the parents attempt to retain their former authority and the children refuse to submit to it, the result is parent-child conflict...The parent whose status has changed the most as a result of changes in his traditional role is the father. In all the immigrant groups studied [Mexican, Jews, Japanese, Italians, Irish, and French-Canadians], the father traditionally was the authority figure and the disciplinarian; and in all these groups he has lost much of these characteristics...Although parent-child relationships are drastically altered in acculturation, husband-wife patterns are little changed." (1955:1247).

Spiro also reports that

> "If, in the normal course of social life, parents are the agents of cultural continutity, in acculturation children become the agents of cultural change--it is the children who teach the new culture to the parents" (Warner and Srole 1945, cited by Spiro 1955: 1247).

The view that the children teach the new culture to their parents is a prominent one throughout the acculturation and cross-cultural studies reveiwed. It is doubtless that that occurs on some levels when a family immigrates to a new country. However, the choice of authors to focus on the negative aspects of the "old" culture and to ignore the positive aspects of family support networks serves to denigrate the positive qualities of immigrants' native cultures and to tacitly blame the parents for "hanging on" to "archaic" ideas, such as respect for parents and elders. LeVine (1988) refers to certain "maladaptive behaviors" of parents in his cultural evolutionary model for

the parents for "hanging on" to "archaic" ideas, such as respect for parents and elders. LeVine (1988) refers to certain "maladaptive behaviors" of parents in his cultural evolutionary model for understanding parental behaviors. Unfortunately, the trend in the field of parent education has been to follow the normative approach set by the researchers.

It was pleasing to note that Spiro viewed the study of ethnic groups by anthropologists to be an important area of cultural research. He remarked that such studies could contribute both to culture theory and acculturation theory and he "hope[d] that at least some...[anthropologists could] be induced to engage in this important area of cultural research" (1955:1248 & 1251).

The review of the literature revealed that traditional ethnographies in anthropology usually mention child-rearing practices and sometimes describe marriage role expectations, but these topics are not explored at great length or from parents' perspectives. Studies of child-rearing practices, especially cross-cultural comparisons, have increased substantially since the 1950's, however, most of these studies tend to focus on very specific behavioral aspects of parent-child interactions within a predetermined scope. Thus, they provide little information about the concept of parenthood from parents' perspectives. Furthermore, Hmong parents' conception of parenthood and of the family have not been adequately explored in the ethnographic literature.

The review of the literature on Hmong refugees in the United States revealed that the various researchers have sometimes come to different conclusions about Hmong cultural values in the United States. It also revealed a tendency for each researcher to generalize her/his findings from the community s/he investigated to all Hmong people living in the United States. I suggest that there is great variation in the values and views of the Hmong population in the United States. The tendency to omit a discussion of the characteristics of the population from which the data were drawn weakens the conclusions by decontextualizing them, leads to various researchers making sweeping statements about the Hmong in the United States that are contradictory in nature, and makes it difficult for others to benefit from a researcher's knowledge.

CHAPTER 1 NOTES

1. According to Nathan Caplan, John Whitmore and Marcella Choy, "Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) is a federal program administered through each state to refugees who do not meet the family compositon requirements of AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children]...but who otherwise meet all of the income and resource eligibility criteria for AFDC" (1989:35). AFDC, a joint federal-state public assistance program, is the primary program providing public assistance to refugees (Caplan, Whitmore, and Choy 1989: 35). In 1981 in Washington State, refugees who had been receiving RCA for more than 18 months were curtailed from the program. Since 1981 in Washington State, RCA eligibility has been further reduced to 12 months.

2. The focus of this study came about as a result of my holding the position of coordinator and parent education instructor for an educational program that provided services to Hmong refugee parents in Spokane, Washington. When I took the position, the program was in its second year of operation. In its first year, program staff had met with resistance and complaints from parents in the program when they attempted to implement a parent education component that was largely based on middle-class Anglo-American parenting norms. During the program's second year, it became evident that the Hmong conception of parenthood was very different from the American conception, especially when American professionals were invited to speak about parenting topics.

3. I have found the Southeast Asian Refugee Studies [SARS] Project Newsletter published quarterly in Minneapolis, MN, to be a good source for locating materials written about the Hmong because it provides an interdisciplinary listing of new materials in each issue. The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs of the University of Minnesota established the SARS Project in 1980 to encourage, coordinate and support research related to the people from Southeast Asia who have been resettled in the United States. Its principal focus was originally on the Hmong people; in more recent years it has begun to include the Cambodian people as well as the Hmong as its focus.

4. Sara Harkness and Charles Super (1982) found that Africa has been the locus of nearly half the existing cross-cultural research on children, particularly of research based on psychological tests which measure specific types of performance.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

TRADITIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS

In collecting information within the Hmong community in Spokane, I employed both the traditional anthropological methods of data collection and the survey method. The latter technique has been more common to the fields of sociology and psychology, though it has been used with increasing frequency in anthropology in the past thirty years. The traditional anthropological methods of collecting data that I used included: 1) establishing rapport with the community; 2) learning the language of the community; 3) doing participant observation; and 4) interviewing people: informally and in unstructured and semi-structured interview settings. I used my knowledge of the community and the data I collected in interviews to design a survey tool. In this chapter I will discuss the above-mentioned methods I used to collect my data.

The time period covered in this research is about five years; however, the time that I most intensively collected data was from October 1989 through September 1990. From October 1984 through May 1986 I spent my time getting to know Hmong individuals and their families in Spokane. From August 1987 through September 1989, I attended events, such as the Hmong New Year Party, sponsored by the Hmong community, visited Hmong people's homes in the capacity of friend and researcher, and conducted semi-structured interviews with Hmong women about their lives before they came to the United States.

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

My contact with the Hmong community in Spokane began when I accepted a position as a VISTA volunteer with a social service agency in Spokane in September, 1984. My primary responsibility was to coordinate an English as a Second Language (ESL) volunteer home-tutoring program for the social service agency. The impetus for the home-tutoring program had come through interviews that the agency's previous director had conducted with family members in her caseload. Through conducting a needs-assessment she had become aware of the fact that there were large Hmong families newly arrived to Spokane whose female members were not attending ESL classes in the community. Reasons were they did not know how to use the city bus system, they had small children, and they were afraid to go out. As a result, the social service agency recruited volunteers to be not only English tutors, but to be advocates for the refugees in the community. This was to be done by helping them to solve problems (such as how to pay telephone and electric bills, how to communicate with landlords, etc.), by familiarizing them with services in the community (such as how to use the city busses, make doctor's and dentist's appointments, etc.), by helping them to obtain driver's licenses, and by providing them with an advocate from the American community.

As a VISTA volunteer and coordinator of the home-tutoring program, I recruited volunteers and matched them with refugees, to whose homes the volunteers would go to provide tutoring. My contact with the

refugee community came through contacting refugees on the phone and visiting their homes to verify whether they wanted to receive tutoring, administering ESL placement tests, and accompanying volunteer tutors to refugees' homes on their first visit (to introduce them to the refugee family they would be working with and to help them set up a tutoring schedule). Refugees heard about the program through announcements made in ESL classes, through the Lao Family Community--a mutual assistance association (or MAA, a social service agency organized by the people to whom it aims to provide social services), through social workers employed by the Department of Social and Health Services, Employment Security, and through social workers that worked for the refugee resettlement agencies in Spokane. The refugee community also heard about the program through word of mouth.

Through this work, I came to know personally a large number of the refugee families who participated in the home-tutoring ESL program. During the time that I was the program coordinator, about 75 refugees received tutoring. In addition to getting to know refugees through the coordination of the home-tutoring program, I became a tutor myself.

During my year as a VISTA volunteer, I tutored two Hmong women who were widowed and heads of their households. During my second year, one of those women moved to California with her children, so another Hmong woman joined the tutoring group. In June, 1988, the second woman from the initial tutoring group moved to California with her children and her mother-in-law, who had recently arrived in Spokane. Pressure from her deceased husband's brothers, her mother-in-law, and her children, she said, persuaded her to move to California.

Since I began tutoring in 1984, I have remained in contact with and acted as an advocate for these Hmong refugee women and their families. Through my work I also became acquainted with Vangchengleng[1], a Hmong social worker, who became one of my key informants. His acceptance of me and my friendship with him and his family have been key factors in helping the Hmong community of Spokane to accept me into their lives. I also met two other Hmong men (Touzer and Tongtoua) while I was a VISTA volunteer, without whose support the Hmong community would not have been so cooperative. Touzer was a refugee case worker and Tongtoua was a social worker.

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

Normally, anthropologists study the language of the community where they are conducting research to enable themselves to conduct interviews and understand the people they are studying. In working with refugee populations in the United States, researchers have often not learned the language of the community, but have instead recruited native-speaking bilingual informants/interpreters to assist them in their research.[2] This is particularly true in the case of researchers who have received grants from the Office of Refugee Resettlement or other foundations where there is a limited amount of time to carry out their research, and funding is normally allotted for interpretation. Therefore, the researchers are not expected to live with the community or to study its language for a year or more before they conduct the research, as has traditionally been true for cultural anthropologists. For my research,

I decided to join the handful of people conducting research among refugees in the United States who learn the language of the people they are researching.

My study of the Hmong language began during my work as a VISTA volunteer. I learned some basic phrases in Hmong, such as how to say "thank you", "come back again", "yes", "no" and "I don't know". Later, I learned some basic greeting dialogues and the names of fruits and how to count to ten to use as a teaching tool in the ESL tutor training sessions I conducted. In my graduate course work, I researched what had been published about the Hmong language, and from that I wrote a paper describing the White Hmong sound system, which summarized the published work of several authors (Hughes 1988). At that point, I had a very rudimentary understanding of the Hmong language.

Fortunately, in the past year, I have been able to study the Hmong language more formally before actually beginning my research. I received funding from the Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowships program to attend the Southeast Asian Summer Studies Institute (SEASSI) at the University of Hawaii. I took an intensive 10-week course that gave me a basic foundation in spoken and written Hmong. From this course I learned enough vocabulary to carry on basic conversations. The SEASSI beginning Hmong class also provided me with enough language foundation to be able to hold my own when I attended a Hmong literacy class that the Lao Family Community Organization of Spokane organized to in 1990.

Since I began studying the Hmong language, I have met with nothing but extreme enthusiasm from Hmong speakers in the Spokane community. Also, since learning their language, people talk to me more openly about their beliefs and the problems they are experiencing. They often seek to instruct and inform me further about what Hmong people think without my having to ask them a question, and they often invite me to their homes to speak with them. In addition to learning more Hmong, I am also learning numerous Lao words that the Hmong have borrowed.

I never expected that I would get such an enthusiastic response from the Hmong community for learning their language. Even though my skill level in the Hmong language is at the beginning level, it has served as a key to open my way for communication with Hmong people in a much more intimate manner. They have begun sharing with me aspects of their lives that I was ignorant of before I began learning their language. I believe that it has significantly altered the quality of my research.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Participant observation was one of the major methods I used to understand Hmong parenting values. The bulk of the knowledge I have about the Hmong in Spokane comes from my spending hours around the Hmong and talking with them. From October 1989 until the end of May, 1990, I coordinated and taught a parent education/literacy program serving the Hmong community of Spokane[3]. My position entailed teaching ESL, literacy, mathematics, and facilitating a parent education class for 10 refugees, 7 of whom were Hmong parents. During those 10 months, I spent close to one thousand hours teaching Hmong parents in the classroom,

observing them interact with their children in the program's onsite daycare, going on field trips with them, facilitating and observing discussions of topics regarding parenting, and visiting them in their homes.

The month prior to the beginning of the classes and in the months since the classes ended, I have also done participant observation and have continued to interact with Hmong families by visiting them in their homes, going on excursions with them and interviewing them.

INTERVIEWING PARENTS

Bernard (1988) describes several types of interviews that anthropologists use to collect data: informal, unstructured, semi-structured, and structured. He defines them as follows:

> "...informal interview[s are] characterized by a total lack of structure or control. The researcher just tries to remember conversations heard during the course of a day...[by] jotting [down notes] and daily sessions...at a typewriter, to unburden...[her/his] memory, and [to] develop...[her/his] field notes.
>
> ....Unstructured interviews are based on a clear plan that...[the researcher] keep[s] constantly in mind, but...[there is] also...a minimum of control over the informant's responses.
>
> ....semi-structured interviewing is based on a written list of questions and topics[, an interview guide]...The interviewer still maintains discretion to follow leads...but the interview guide is a set of clear instructions...
>
> [In a]...structured interview...all informants are asked to respond to as nearly identical a set of stimuli as possible. One variety of structured interview involves the use of an explicit set of instructions to interviewers who administer questionnaires orally...self-administered questionnaires are structured interviews." (Bernard 1988:204-206)

My research has included all of those types. The majority of my interviews have been informal and unstructured. In the first four years that I was interacting with people in the Hmong community, most of my interviews were informal. However, I also conducted unstructured interviews with women whom I tutored as part of an approach for teaching reading known as the "language experience approach" (LEA). In LEA, the student tells the teacher a story from her personal experience and the teacher transcribes the story. The teacher subsequently presents the written story to the student as the basis for teaching her reading.

In the two years that I have been interviewing Hmong people as part of my thesis research, I have conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews, as well as informal ones. I have devised two different interview schedules in the Hmong language that I have used in my semi-structured interviews.

For this research I conducted formal interviews with 15 Hmong parents, both female and male. Each interview lasted from one to five hours and most of them took place in the home of the person being

interviewed. I interviewed some of the informants on more than one occasion. Most of the informants allowed me to tape the interviews. I found, however, that most informants spoke more candidly and offered more information when I was not taping their conversations.

PARENT SURVEY

As a culmination of my year of teaching in the parent education/literacy program, I constructed a survey to gather data from Hmong regarding their perception of parental roles, what to teach children and how to best discipline children. The survey consisted of 25 statements. I chose statements intended to represent values common to Hmong parents in Laos (taken from my field experience with the Hmong community in Spokane and from anthropological literature on the Hmong, such as the work of Bernatzik 1970; Yang 1975; Lee 1981; and Smoot 1985) and values common to American parents (taken from parent education curricula aimed at American parents in the United States). Topic areas of the survey included parental roles by gender, and ways to teach, interact with and discipline children. There were several statements in each topic area.

I designed the survey with nonliterate refugees in mind. For that reason I used the Faces scale, used by Meredith and Rowe (1986) in their survey of changes in Hmong refugees' marriage values in America. Each time I administered the survey, I asked a literate Hmong refugee explain to the respondents the meaning of each face. (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey with the Faces scale.) The interviewer would then read the statements of the survey one by one, giving the respondents time to circle the face that corresponded to their feelings about the statement before proceeding to the next statement. (Respondents were asked to circle one of three faces for each statement which indicated whether they agreed, disagreed or did not know how they felt.)

The first version of my Parent Survey consisted of 30 statements. The respondents received an answer sheet with two 5-point Faces scales next to each number. For each statement read, I asked respondents to do two things: to circle one of five faces on the first scale for how they felt about the statement at the time they were taking the survey, and to circle one of five faces on the adjacent scale for how they felt about the statement when they were still living in Laos (or in a refugee camp in Thailand, for the younger respondents).

The first two times I administered the survey, I had respondents circle their responses on a separate answer sheet which had two Faces scales . I observed that it was difficult for nonliterate refugees to keep track of their places on the answer sheet, and that the 5-point scale seemed more complex than what I needed. I therefore re-designed the survey, placing a 3-point Faces scale (agree, not sure, disagree) next to each written statement and did away with using a separate answer sheet. Also, based on my observations during the first two times I administered the survey, I felt that the second scale was not providing additional information and that it tended to confuse the respondents. Consequently, I eliminated the second Faces scale (where respondents were to circle how they thought they felt about the statement before coming to the United States) in the revised version of my survey.

For respondents who did not have experience in filling out written surveys and for those who had little experience with formal education (less than 3 years of primary school), I found it necessary to administer the survey by having a Hmong person who was familiar with surveys and who was literate in Hmong translate my oral instructions and then read the statements of the survey. As it turned out, they also assisted the respondents who had trouble figuring out how to record their responses. I was present in four different situations where the survey was administered.

Seven Hmong parents in the parent education/literacy program responded to the first version of my survey. Parents in the Hmong literacy class responded to the revised version of my survey about two weeks later in June, 1990. Throughout the following months, I administered the survey to an additional 21 Hmong parents.

Four Hmong assisted me in the translation of the survey statements. Initially, I wrote the survey statements in English and my key informant, Vangchengleng, translated them into Hmong. In the second round, I gave the translated version of the survey to Tongtoua, a second Hmong informant who then translated the statements back into English. At that time, I made some minor changes to some of the survey statements and dropped some statements that were not clear, thus reducing the number of survey statements from 30 to 25. I got further feedback from a Hmong man when I administered the survey to him. He made written notes on the survey and after he finished filling it out, he explained his suggested changes to me.

On one occasion I administered the survey to Khaoshoua, Vangchengleng's wife, and asked her to translate each statement as she understood it into English. I chose Khaoshoua to do the translation because she had extensive experience working as a classroom aid at a local pre-school where a large number of Hmong children attend, and I believed she would be more familiar with the concepts in my survey. While Khaoshoua was giving me feedback on what she understood the survey statements to mean in English, Vangchengleng came home and became involved in the discussion I was having with her.

Khaoshoua was not sure she understood the meaning of some of the statements, and she disagreed with the wording of others, for which she wrote suggested changes. Vangchengleng and Kaoshoua disagreed as to the meaning of the words used in some of the statements; they were not able to come to any agreement. Vangchengleng suggested that I ask the opinion of another woman. Khaoshoua suggested that I administer the survey in English to eliminate confusion. (Subsequently, she too, felt that I should ask another woman to translate the survey statements from Hmong into English in order to have the opinions of two women to balance out the opinions I had obtained from two men.) In the end, I asked Khaoshoua how she would rank the statements as they were, and then how she would rank them after she had made the suggested changes.

In general, I felt that the various informants I asked to translate the survey back into English agreed on the meaning of the statements. The disagreements that Vangchengleng and Kaoshoua had tended to be minor ones over syntax rather than ones that significantly changed the meaning of the statements, and they affected only 3 out of 25 statements.

TRANSLATION OF AMERICAN CONCEPTS

Because I wanted to find out where Hmong and American parents might differ in their parenting values, I included statements which represented both American and Hmong parenting values. It was extremely time-consuming and difficult to determine Hmong translations for some of the terms commonly used in parent education curricula, such as "self-esteem" and "self-confidence". Other words that presented difficulty were "curious", "creative", "defiance", "criticizing", "responsibility", "corporal punishment" as opposed to "non-corporal punishment" and "disciplining". (See Appendix B for list of translations used to convey the meanings of those words.) In general, the Hmong language does not have one word translations for the above-mentioned words. Therefore, I had to explain the concept that each of those words represents as best I could, and then provide examples of situations where we would use those words. Once the Hmong informant/interpreter understood the concept behind the word, s/he came up with a sentence in Hmong which approximated the same idea. That is the reason for some of the confusion that the Hmong informants had in translating the survey back into English, and for some of the suggestions they made. The Hmong informants who helped me with the translation of my survey statements all have good communication skills in English and are familiar with American society. They tend to be spokespeople for the Hmong community. Because of the confusion they had, it leaves one wondering about how much more confusion the Hmong who are less familiar with American society had when they participated in the survey.

Even when an English term had a direct translation in Hmong, such as "independent" (in Hmong, it is "ywj siab ywj ntsws", "according to the desires of one's liver/heart and lungs"), that corresponds directly to an English word, the Hmong concept of the Hmong term did not always correspond exactly to the American concept of the English term. On one occasion I administered the survey to a Hmong parent who also speaks English very well. She asked me what some of the statements meant in English, having difficulty understanding the Hmong statements out of any comprehensible context. One of the statements she asked me about was the one that contained the term "ywj siab ywj ntsws". My informant stated that she disagreed with the statement, "Niam txiv tsim tsim nyog yuav qhia rau cov me nyuam paub tias lawv ua tau ywj siab ywj ntsws" (parents should encourage their children to be independent), but that she would agree with the statement in English. She said that although "ywj siab ywj ntsws" translates to mean "independent" in English, the two words held different meanings for her.

VALIDITY OF THE SURVEY DATA

There are several further issues which lead me to question whether the survey data have any real validity. First, I noticed that when each group of respondents participated in the survey, except for the Hmong who have attended institutions of higher education in this country, after each statement was read to them, they made comments aloud or discussed the statement as a group. Sometimes they told anecdotes

relating to the statement. On many occasions, the discussion led to a group consensus as to the "correct" answer to a statement.

This type of group discussion is not normally expected to take place in a survey, but it reflects what is a norm for how decisions are made and opinions are formed in Hmong society. Group consensus and compromise are valuable tools the Hmong use for coming to decisions that everyone can live by. They have been valuable problem-solving methods for settling disputes in Hmong society for hundreds of years.

Also, the Hmong are familiar with the Laotion education system, which is modeled after the French system. It is a system which values rote learning, in which there is one correct answer. While I was taking Hmong literacy classes, which were organized and taught by Hmong people in Spokane, I noticed that the teachers taught in a manner which encouraged memorization rather than figuring out answers by deduction. On tests and in written exercises, the teachers permitted and encouraged students who had the answers to help those who did not.

As the Hmong parents in the parent education class I was teaching told me, in Laos, all parents agree as to the correct way to teach and discipline children and everyone follows that way. Children across society receive similar messages from their parents, and children do not get one message at school and another at home. The above examples are cited to show that for Hmong people, working together to solve a problem even when the problem involved responding to a survey, is the optimal way to accomplish the task.

Another indication I had that the Hmong participating in my survey used group consensus to a large extent was that when participants got behind in circling their answers, they would ask other respondents what the answer to number such and such was. I observed respondents asking that question on two different occasions.

The last observation that I wish to make, which leads me to question the validity of the survey, was that some of the respondents were slower than the group in marking their answers. Sometimes they got behind, and circled their answer to a statment which did not correspond to the statement being read or they went back and circled answers they had missed by copying what someone else had circled.

For all of the above reasons, I feel that the surveys did not provide me with information about Hmong parenting values that was anywhere near so accurate as the more traditional anthropological methods of participant observation and interviewing that I used. I feel that the latter methods provided me with more reliable information as to the Hmong perception of parenthood despite methodological problems that I discuss in the following section.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Conducting research in the field among refugees resettled in the United States, American fieldworkers act as cultural brokers for the informants and become participants in events affecting the informants' lives. Thus, researchers influence the events and lives of the people they are researching; they also influence the types of information that informants share with them. In my case, I have been an active participant in the lives of the people I have been researching. My

roles with the Hmong in Spokane have been cultural broker, advocate, and teacher as well as researcher. Nancy Donnelly, who conducted her research among Hmong refugee women in Seattle under circumstances similar to my own, faced the same methodological problem. As Donnelly put it,

> "Fieldworkers (who may have an entirely different agenda of their own) are pressed into the roles of teacher, facilitator, interviewer, and protector. Thus the "price" of doing research among refugees is to act in a helping capacity" (Donnelly 1989:16).

I have undoubtedly had an influence on the type of information people told me and I have almost certainly filtered what has been told to me without intending to. While I have tried to be aware of my own biases, I take full responsibility for any mistakes and misinterpretations that I have made of the data I collected.

FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In this study the aspects of parenting that are described in more detail are the ones with apparent relevance to understanding where Hmong values differ from those of middle-class Anglo-American parents. The present study is concerned with the reporting of Hmong parenting values through the Hmong parents' eyes as a first step to facilitating the creation of a parent education environment that is truly pluralistic in nature.

There are several reasons for the particular focus of this research. In the first place, my being a friend and advocate of the Spokane Hmong community stimulates the desire to contribute toward a better understanding of the parenting issues of the Hmong refugee community in Spokane. In the second place, while the current official rhetoric behind parent education programs serving the refugee and immigrant communities appears to be wiser and more tolerant of cultures other than the dominant middle-class Anglo-American culture than in the past, program goals and evaluative criteria still reflect an assumption of deficiency in parenting skills and an assumption that refugee and immigrant parents must ultimately conform to the norms of the dominant Anglo culture. (See Gordon 1964 for a more detailed discussion of the Anglo-conformity branch of the assimilationist school.) A third reason for the focus of this study is that, all too often, the Hmong population in the United States captures the imagination of reporters, and subsequently of the American public, as their cultural values clash with those of mainstream America. I have undertaken this study with the hope that it will offer educators, social workers and others who work with Hmong families information that will enable them to formulate rational approaches to solving the problems they face in helping Hmong refugee families adjust to life in the United States. I also hope that this study will render a contribution in the promotion of education programs for Hmong people living in the United States. The Hmong population is and will continue to be an important cultural group in the United States.

Within this scope, the study was limited in its investigation by concentrating on

1. a particular geographical locale;
2. a particular group of Hmong refugees in that locale; and,
3. the parenting values of a group of Hmong refugees in that locale that included a larger number of females than males.

The scope of this research is limited to the Hmong people with whom I have become friends, either as a result of being their teacher, classmate, or because we hit it off well with each other. The people I have interviewed more formally have been among those whom I have come to know the best. It would not have been possible to receive the cooperation necessary to collect the data I have collected by randomly choosing informants from among the Hmong community. At times when I have formally interviewed relatives of Hmong people with whom I am well-acquainted, I have not always received cooperation. For example, the newly arrived mother-in-law of a woman whom I knew well after having tutored her for two years was unwilling to answer many of the questions I posed when I attempted to interview her formally. I have had similar responses from individuals with whom I had not first developed a relationship, which has made me aware of the limitations I face as a researcher.

People have been most cooperative when one of the Hmong community leaders has recommended that they assist in this investigation by answering my questions and/or when I have had established a relationship with them as a friend, teacher, or advocate prior to the formal interview. As stated earlier, without the support and assistance of a key informant and of leaders in the Spokane Hmong community, I would not have received the cooperation of the Hmong community in Spokane.

Spokane, Washington, is the focus of this investigation, with the assumption that the findings will be in the main applicable to Hmong communities in similar medium-sized urban milieus to the extent that conditions are parallel.

This study made an explicit effort to include the presentation of the point of view of the Hmong mother as well as the father because often studies of the Hmong have relied on data obtained through interviews exclusively or primarily with male heads of households. A secondary reason was that the refugee students in the parent education/literacy program that I worked with were predominantly female.

No statistical analysis other than tallies and percentages of survey responses by age, sex and education-level was undertaken. The study was limited to an interpretive description of Hmong parenting values from the Hmong parents' perspective.

CHAPTER 2 NOTES

1. All of the names in this thesis are pseudonyms.

2. It has also been common for anthropologists to rely on informants who interpret for them.

3. The program was an Even Start Project funded by the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Early Child Education Office. It was aimed at improving the literacy and math skills of parents, as well as "improving" their parenting skills. The program I worked with was designed specifically for refugee and immigrant parents.

4. The Hmong word, "siab", literally means "liver" (the physical organ) when used with the classifier "lub". However, the liver is regarded as the seat of affections and emotions by the Hmong, much as "heart" in English. Therefore, the Hmong word "siab" often translates into "heart" in English.

CHAPTER 3. CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE HMONG IN LAOS

This chapter will provide a demographic, ethnographic and historical account of the Hmong people. The demographic account will include a description of Hmong communities worldwide, those in Southeast Asia, those in the United States, and the Hmong community in Spokane, Washington. The ethnographic sketch will include a description of the economic, social and political organization of the Hmong in Laos during the first half of this century. The historical overview includes a discussion of the Hmong origins, their history in Laos, and their refugee status and subsequent resettlement to the United States. Sources include published anthropologists' and missionaries' accounts and interviews with Hmong refugees who have resettled to the United States.

HMONG COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

The majority of the Hmong people in the world (about 5 million) live in southern China in the provinces of Kweichow, Hunnan, and Yunnan (Chinese People's Republic's 1982 census, China Financial and Economic Publishing House 1988:180). Hmong people began migrating into Laos and neighboring countries in Southeast Asia from China about 150 years ago. During the time period 1900-1950, as today, Hmong people were living scattered throughout the highlands of Southeast Asia; it was difficult to estimate the number of Hmong living in Southeast Asia because they lived in remote areas at altitudes of 3000 feet and higher. Traditionally their villages were scattered hamlets of 2-6 households and, because they practiced slash/burn agriculture, they moved from one area to another following their fields or pioneering to new regions if the population density became too great and resources too scarce. They had little contact with the outside world (Savina 1924:182).

Hmong communities outside of Asia have emerged since 1975 when thousands of Hmong began fleeing persecution they suffered in Laos for having been aligned with the United States after the Vietnamese-backed Pathet Lao took control of the Laotian government. (As indicated previously, since 1975 more than 130,000 Hmong have fled from Laos [Cooper 1986:24]). The United States, Canada, France, French Guyana, and Australia have all become countries of second asylum for Hmong refugees, meaning that they have agreed to allow Hmong refugees to resettle within their borders. The Hmong community in French Guyana formed as a result of the French government's decision to resettle some of its Hmong refugees in that French overseas "departement". The United States had a Hmong population estimated to be 105,000 in 1988 (Yang and North 1988:6). France had a Hmong population of about 7000 in 1987 and Australia had about 350 Hmong people living there in 1986.

THE HMONG POPULATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In the 1960's and 1970's, estimates of the Hmong population size ranged from 150,000 in all of Southeast Asia (LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave 1964:73) to 350,000 living in Laos alone (Garrett 1974). Osborn estimated the total Hmong and Mien tribal population of Laos at

100,000 in the early 1960s (Osborn 1967:260), while Young estimated the Hmong population in Thailand at 45,000 in 1960 (Young 1962).

The 1986 census in Laos estimated the total number of Lao-Soung or "Lao-of-the-mountaintops", which comprise the Hmong as well as other highland peoples, at about 330,000 (Paxton 1987). The population is sparse in the northern provinces and the eastern part of the country has been depopulated by war. These were the areas where the Hmong traditionally lived. As of the end of 1987, there were about 60,000 Hmong people from Laos still in refugee camps on the Thai border with Laos (Robinson 1987:52).

The current situation for the Hmong in Laos is that the Pathet Lao government is resettling most of them to the lowlands, where they are "encouraged" to integrate into the Laotian national economy. The Indochina Country Report states that Mobile Propaganda Units, attached to a special division of the People's Army known as the "Mountain Area Development Company" had been resettling hilltribes people to new settlements as a part of their development of forestry industries (Economist Intelligence Unit 1987). The 1987 Statesman's Year-book reports that opium production and manufacture is now controlled by the state in Laos (Paxton 1987). Informants who communicate with relatives who still live in Laos and with others who left Laos in the eighties have told me that the traditional Hmong way of life as it existed prior to the war (and the socio-economy that went along with it) has radically changed.

For the Hmong who chose not to comply with the Laotian People's Army Mobile Propaganda Units, as late as the early 1980s there still existed the possibility of joining the small resistance movement and living the life of a guerrilla in the jungles, or fleeing to the Thai border and hoping not to get turned away. (Roger Winter, the director ofthe U.S. Committee for Refugees, presented a House subcommittee with the names of 362 Hmong who had been turned away from Thailand during hearings on the refugee situation in March, 1987. Four days later, the Thais rounded up 38 undocumented immigrants in the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp, which alone houses more than 40,000 Hmong refugees, and sent them back to Laos [Ranard 1987:32].)

HMONG COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Doua Yang's and David North's report, Profiles of the Highland Lao Communities in the United States, prepared for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Family Support Administration, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement in 1988 is the most useful source I have found for information about Hmong communities in the United States. Although, as Yang and North state, "some of the population figures are precise counts, others are informed estimates and still others are guestimates", the report probably contains the most accurate and up-to-date statistical information on Hmong communities in the United States. Yang and North collected the data for CZA, Inc. by interviewing refugee leaders in communities throughout the United States. Their report estimates that there were about 105,000 Hmong people living in the United States in 1987 (Yang and North 1988:6). Seventy-one Hmong communities consisting of 12 or more families were located within 30

states as of the summer of 1987 (Yang and North 1988:15). In 1987, most (85%) of the Hmong lived in three states: California, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Fifteen percent of the Hmong population was scattered in 27 other states. Yang and North state that "...the Hmong population in Wisconsin has more than doubled in the last five years, while the Hmong population in states other than California, Wisconsin and Minnesota has dropped by several thousand" (1988:23).

The Central Valley area of California had the largest Hmong population in the United States, with an estimated 58,976 Hmong (56% of the total U.S. Hmong population). The largest Hmong community was in Fresno, California, in the Central Valley, with a population of about 24,000 (Yang and North 1988; Spencer 1988:592). Merced, also in the Central Valley of California, was the town with the third largest Hmong community in the United States; it had 7,500 Hmong people.

Wisconsin was the state with the second largest Hmong population. Sixteen per cent (13,700) of the U.S. Hmong lived there. The Hmong population in Wisconsin was spread out among more cities than it was in California or Minnesota. There were 12 communities of 12 families or more. Eight of those twelve communities had Hmong populations well over 1000.

Minnesota had the third largest Hmong population: 13,700 (13% of the total U.S. Hmong population). Most of the Hmong in Minnesota resided in the St. Paul-Minneapolis area. St. Paul had the second largest Hmong community in the U.S. with a population of about 13,450.

Oregon, Michigan, Rhode Island, Washington and Colorado were four states with Hmong populations over 1000. Denver, Colorado had 1300 Hmong, while Providence, Rhode Island had 2178 and Portland, Oregon had 1130. Detroit, Lansing and Saginaw, Michigan had a combined Hmong population of 2610; Carnation, Seattle, Spokane, and Pasco, Washington had a combined Hmong population of 1182. (Yang and North 1988:25-26) The average Hmong population was about 375 in communities outside of the states of California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Yang and North reported the self-sufficiency rate, nationwide, for the Hmong to be 37% (CZA survey, cited in Yang and North 1988:15). However, there were significant differences in that rate from one state to another. In rural to semi-rural northern California counties with the fastest-growing Hmong communities nationwide, welfare dependency was found to be the norm (Yang and North 1988:23). Hmong living outside the three principal states of concentration were much more likely to own a home or a business or to be a college graduate. Yang's and North's data also showed that "the most self-sufficient of the communites (other than those in the Planned Secondary Resettlement program) appeared to the the ones with the most rapidly-shrinking populations" (Yang and North 1988:22). Planned Secondary Resettlement (PSR) is a federal program that helps unemployed refugees or those on welfare to become self-sufficient. It pays a family's relocation fees to a new community, helps the family find housing, pays a housing stipend (initially), and finds jobs for family members (Yang and North 1988:50). In return, the head of the household participating in the program must sign a statement indicating that s/he wants to work and will not apply for public assistance in the new community for a specified period of time.

The most commonly-cited problems that informants for Yang's and North's report indicated were inter-generational conflict, mental health problems, delinquency and youth gangs, marital problems, cultural adjustments problems and drug abuse. The authors of the report stated that "there was a lot of overlap among the generational, delinquency and drug responses, but there were different distributions as well. Drugs were mentioned only in the largest of Hmong concentrations..." (Yang and North 1988:21).

THE HMONG COMMUNITY IN SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

The Hmong community I studied resides in Spokane, Washington, a city of about 200,000. Spokane has a general unemployment rate a little above the U.S. average, but has shown signs of a stronger economy in the past year. Housing prices are below the U.S. average, but have been increasing. Spokane has several institutions of higher education. The Hmong community is made up of about 70 families and 400 individuals. In the early 1980's the Hmong community numbered close to 2000. In the summer of 1981 there was a large migration of families to California and other locations when federal refugee assistance cutbacks came into effect. Throughout the rest of the eighties, the Hmong population decreased as families continued leaving. Most families have left searching for better educational and employment opportunities or to join relatives in other parts of the country. Since 1985, about 25 new Hmong families arrived from overseas. In the 90's the Hmong community holds the promise of renewed growth as the job opportunities in the area increase and as Hmong who were youths when their families migrated to California and elsewhere graduate from college and can compete for jobs. Hmong informants perceive the city they live in as a desirable place to raise children; that perception has caused families who lived in the city formerly to return and may bring more families to Spokane in the future, too.

Forty-eight of the families have workers; however, about half of the men's jobs and most of the women's jobs are part-time. Twenty of the families have only one wage earner, the other 28 have two or more wage-earners. For families with more than one wage-earner, the average income is $20,800. For single wage-earner families, the average annual income is $12,480. Twenty-eight families have private medical insurance. There are twenty cases of families who receive public assistance of some sort to supplement low-income work. The majority of wage-earners (both male and female) hold electronic assembly positions and service positions in the hotel or restaurant industries. Other jobs that men hold are social worker, counsellor, pre-school teacher, pre-school classroom aid, and translator. Other jobs women hold are pre-school teacher, pre-school classroom aide, translator, bank teller, and clerical worker. The average hourly wage for men is $6.00, while for women it is $4.50. Twelve families have no workers and must rely entirely on public assistance for their incomes.

There are 10 female-headed households. The average family size is 5.7 persons. Of the 150 persons over 18 years of age, 15 are community college graduates, 4 are graduates of 4-year programs and one has a master's degree. There are 20 persons currently enrolled in

institutions of higher education. Levels of proficiency in English among the other 110 adults in the community vary greatly. Although there are a number of factors that affect proficiency-level in English, such as age at arrival in the United States and education level, in general, those who have resided in the United States more than five years have at least a minimal level of proficiency in English. (For more information about factors affecting English proficiency levels, see Green and Reder 1986.) The children in the Spokane Hmong community are acquiring the English language once they begin attending pre-school programs such as Head Start and the public schools.

Sixteen families own their own homes, while about 20 live in government-subsidized housing. There are two Hmong-owned businesses in the community. One provides landscaping services, while the other provides janitorial services. These figures compare with national figures for the Hmong as follows: 9.7% of the Hmong families in the U.S. own their homes, 1.0% own a business, 11.3% of the families have a college student, and 3.0% have a college graduate (CZA Survey, 1988 cited in Yang and North 1988:18).

About six of the Hmong clans are represented, with families coming from the northern provinces and Xieng Khouang Province. The Moua clan is the most numerous one in Spokane and the Xiong clan has the second largest representation.

A number of the Spokane Hmong Christian community converted to Christianity before coming to the United States. One group of the Christian community currently has its own church and a Hmong pastor. A second group of Christian Hmong hold weekly services in an American church. One of the church elders leads those services. In addition to these two Christian Hmong groups, there are other Hmong individuals who consider themselves Christians and attend American church services. There are also Hmong families who follow the traditional Hmong religious practices. Some of them occasionally attend and are losely affiliated with American churches as well. For example, they may hold funeral services for a deceased family member at an American church.

To my knowledge, there are currently three independently organized Hmong New Year celebrations in Spokane each year. The Christian Hmong hold their New Year's celebration with a church service being the major part of the celebration. The celebration offered by the non-Christians features performances of traditional music played on the "rab nqees", bard-singing and a traditional courting game: the ball toss, as well as less traditional fashion shows and performances of Laotian and Thai traditional dances. Some of the clans also host their own New Year's celebration independent of the two mentioned above. The number of New Year's celebrations is a indicator of differences between groups in the community. While some of the clans may feel that they have irreconcilable differences with each other, other clans attend several New Year's parties.

HMONG CULTURE

In discussing the economic, social and political organization of the Hmong, I find Hmong anthropologist Gary Yia Lee's description of the traditional Hmong culture useful.

"To a Hmong, what distinguishes the Hmong from other people is their Hmong way of life. This way of life is centered around shifting agriculture, a language with mutually intelligible dialects, a strong belief in ancestor worship and animism, a division of labor according to family membership and sex, a social structure based on kinship ties through the patrilineage and clan systems, a patrivirilocal pattern of residence, a history of migration from southern China and a long tradition of being stateless" (Lee 1986:55).

"The Hmong economy was based on subsistence farming, supplemented by foraging, hunting, some fishing and handicrafts. Agriculture was closely related to the Hmongs[']religion through such practices as ritual offerings to appease field spirits and "first fruit" ceremonies...in order to [obtain]...spiritual protection [from the lineage ancestors]" (Lee 1986:56).

"The relationship between ancestors and descendants, between religion and social structure defined the Hmong way of life clearly" (ibid., p. 58).

Like Lee, Lemoine (1972:165) and Cooper (1984:43) also classify the Hmong as having a patrilocal pattern of residence. Cooper cites some instances where patriuxoricality occurs, but these cases seem to have been a minority (1984:43-44). Hmong informants agreed with Lee's classification; they told me that the norm was for the bride to go to live with her husband's family.

THE HMONG ECONOMY

As Lee said, the traditional Hmong economy was primarily a subsistence economy characterized by cooperation between patrilineally-related kin. Norms of indirect reciprocity and redistribution acted to maintain the social structure and to reduce surplus food production. Gathering, hunting and fishing served to expand the food base, but agriculture was the primary economic base of the Hmong. Where suitable land and water resources were available, the Hmong practiced wet rice cultivation using buffalo to plow; otherwise, they practiced hoe culture with dry rice cultivation.

Rice and corn were the staple subsistence crops. The Hmong grew opium as a cash crop. They also raised livestock. Pigs, chickens and cattle were important sacrificial animals. The Hmong also raised goats, buffalo, sheep, ducks, and geese. They kept small horses to use as pack animals, and dogs to guard the houses. The Hmong used livestock for meat (in the form of sacrifices later consumed), cash sales, and breeding.

The Hmong household budget could be divided into two categories: subsistence, which included rice, corn, domesticated animals, opium, and tobacco; and exterior purchases, which included salt, wax, thread, dye, cloth, batteries, oil, medicines, and other things the Hmong did not produce themselves (Lemoine 1972:138). Often the Hmong villages did

their trading with Chinese traders who came to their villages to buy opium and sell goods. The money system was originally the Chinese system of silver bars. Later, it was replaced with the Indochinese piastre, and later yet with the Laotian kip. The latter system was only used with outsiders. Within the Hmong community silver bars were used and later the piastre coin since it was silver, too. Opium was also used as a unit of exchange as well as pigs and sometimes rice (Bernatzik 1970:569; Lemoine 1972:153-155).

HMONG SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The patrilineal clan lies at the heart of the Hmong social structure. As Barney states "...[it] dominates their social organization, serving as a primary focus for their culture as a whole by tying together social, political, economic, and religious aspects of behavior (Barney 1967:275). In turning to a description of the social organization of the Hmong, Lemoine's description of the Hmong individual's "three-way membership" in society is useful.

> "Every individual is at the same time, a member of a clan, a member of a common descent group: a lineage; and a member of a household which contains one or several nuclear families under one roof." (Lemoine 1972:137)

THE HOUSEHOLD

The household was the most basic social and economic unit of organization in Hmong society. The strongest categories of allegiances and relationships resided in the household, which often contained three generations of the same family. A household consisted of a man and his wife or wives[1], their children, their married sons' wives and children, sick or old relatives, adopted children, and other Hmong who were without relatives and had been taken into the household (Bernatzik 1970:43-45 & 62-63; Cooper 1984:38-39).

The Hmong recognized the nuclear family (a man, his wife/wives and children) as the smallest unit in their social structure. According to Bernatzik, the nuclear family would reside within the extended family, in which it possessed its own sleeping compartment "until...[the husband] completed...his thirtieth year" (1970:43). Bernatzik states that the Hmong viewed "the thirtieth year as the attainment of a man's majority" (1970:44). Lemoine says that as soon as a son married, he was free to leave his father's home, so it was of his own free choice if a son stayed (and was therefore able to continue benefiting from the collective group) (1972:138-139). In the case where there wasn't enough room for a nuclear family in the house or there wasn't enough land to support them, married sons would move with their families to areas where they had clan ties and where there was land available for cultivation.

Hmong households were similar to Chinese households: powerful and compact economic units, deriving their power from the denial of personal interests in favor of collective interests. A difference, however, was that the Chinese households evolved around a terrain that would be passed down and divided up among the sons. The Hmong did not own land in the sense of purchasing it and holding a title to it. They

cultivated land that was not being cultivated. When the land that a family cultivated was no longer fertile and when there was not enough unclaimed land available, families migrated to new areas where there was fertile, unclaimed land. Informants told me that claimed land was marked by a symbol put on a tree on the land. If no mark was found on a piece of land, one was free to cultivate it. Of course, one would also check with local inhabitants, if there were any in the vicinity. My informants' reports concur with Geddes' account of local customs governing the ownership of land. Also, according to Geddes, "early settlers attract and usually welcome fellow clansmen, other relatives, and sometimes even Miao [Hmong] strangers...The new comers occupy the unused land..." (Geddes 1976:135). In general, the Hmong cultivated as much land as there were people to cultivate it. All adult members of the household that were physically able contributed to the cultivation and thus the subsistence/survival of the group. Within an extended family made up of several nuclear families, each nuclear family, like the individual wives within a polygynous household, had their own private economic systems. The entire extended family worked the rice field in common, but the smaller groups raised their own chickens, pigs, vegetables, and opium for private consumption.

A similarity that the Hmong household had to the Chinese household was the authority structure. The principle of respect for and authority of husbands and elders governed the household units. Traditionally, the rights of the male head of household were extensive. Everyone living in the house had to obey him; he had unlimited authority, and he could punish, beat or, in special cases, even kill members of the household (Bernatzik 1970:51). When disputes broke out within a household, it was the head of the household who had the final word in settling them. Although the head of household had the final word, he often conferred with the other males of the household in coming to decisions. Bernatzik said that he never observed a decision against the will of the subordinate concerned. (Bernatzik 1970:51-62)

The Hmong considered men to be higher in the authority structure than women. The men made decisions and women had very little say in the decision-making process. According to Cooper, a man was likely to discuss an important descision with male relatives or with a non-relative with specialized knowledge (Cooper 1984:174-5). A man, says Cooper, would be likely to inform his wife of his decision to take on a new wife or to buy a buffalo, for example, but he would not be likely to discuss it with her. A male informant, however, told me that a husband would be wise to confer with his wife before making a major decision to avoid conflict later on. From the perspective of a Hmong woman, who was one of anthropologist Donnelly's informants, it was the Hmong woman's role to support her husband's ideas (Donnelly 1989:62). The views of both the male and female informant described above concur with Hmong anthropologist Lee's statement regarding husbands' and wives' duties: "He should treat his wife with authority and kindliness, and consult her on major decision-making...A wife, in return, should not argue too much with her husband, and should follow his wishes in most situations without a high degree of self-assertion" (Lee 1981:113). The family of a woman's husband would expect her to work hard. According to

Bernatzik, a wife would be expected to show obedience first to her mother-in-law, secondly to her husband, and thirdly to her father-in-law. (Bernatzik 1970:154-155) Women gained authority in the household primarily through age and through becoming mothers.

LINEAGES

The social structure one step up from the household was the common descent group or the lineage. A lineage group was made up of all the blood relatives, male and female, descended from a common male; lineages were generally traced to no more than 4 generations. A lineage could be thought of as a larger extended family than the household (Cooper 1984:37-38). In the ideal social structure the household should grow and expand into a lineage composed of several locally grouped extended family households. Everyone would be "ib caub kwv tij" (one family brothers) under the spiritual leadership of the "tu hau zo", which in Hmong translates into both village head and lineage head (There is no term to differentiate between the head of a one-clan village and the head of a multi-clan village.) (Cooper 1984: 45).

At the turn of the century, probably the most common pattern of settlement was for all members of a single lineage to live in the same village and, thus, the oldest household head was both the village head and the lineage head (Savina 1924: 182; Bernatzik 1970: 362). This may explain why the Hmong term "zo" can be used to indicate both lineage and village. If migration was necessary, it would ideally follow a lineal pattern of entire household relocations often moving short distances to catch the group up with the fields it cultivated (Cooper 1984: 49; Bernatzik 1970: 355-57). When more than one clan resided in a village setting, each clan had its own "tu hua zo" who was the eldest male head of household of the clan.

By the middle of the century and certainly by the 1960s and 1970s, settlement patterns had become much more diverse in Laos. It was common to find numerous clans and even ethnic groups in the same village as people fled the war. In his studies of a Green Hmong village in the mid-1960s, Lemoine noted that in the absence of male blood ties, female blood ties such as sister, father's sister, mother's brother and the children of any of these could serve to form lineage ties; these ties would enable families to move into communities where they had no male kinship links (Lemoine 1972:191). Lemoine also noted that White Hmong who moved into a village where they were a minority, would build their houses near other members of their clan even though they were Green Hmong rather than near the few White Hmong that lived in the village. Cooper observed that when indirect reciprocity in the consumption of the product of labor and work cooperation occurred, it appeared to be most frequent between members of a single lineage (Cooper 1984:103).

CLANS

The patri-clan is the next higher level of social organization in Hmong society. The Hmong clans are very similar to the Chinese surname groups, but many fewer in number (15 or 16 as opposed to 438). The Hmong word for clan is "Xeem" and the Chinese word is "sing", pronounced

almost identically. A Hmong woman told me the Hmong origin myth which describes how the clans came to be.

> "There was a great flood which had killed all of the earth's inhabitants except for a brother and sister. The boy tricked his sister into marrying him by saying that the gods had told him that if, when they rolled a stone mill down a hill, both parts of the mill stayed intact, they could marry; but, if the parts separated, they should not. The boy told his sister about this and they rolled the stone mill down a hill. The boy ran ahead of his sister and put the two parts of the mill that had separated together before his sister caught up to him, and thus, convinced her that they should marry. Soon after she got pregnant and had a baby that didn't have any arms or legs. The gods instructed them to cut the baby up and to scatter the pieces throughout the countryside. They did so, placing a piece on a tree, another on a flower, etc. The many pieces of flesh took nourishment from the earth and grew into people. Each person became the founder of a Hmong clan."

(This also corresponds to the origin myth that Lemoine describes, 1972:184-5.)

Lemoine notes that lineages are not traced as far back with the Hmong as they are with the Chinese. He attributes this to their swidden agricultural practices, which sometimes forced members of a lineage to move far away from each other in search of new fields and to the absence of a written language. As a result, different lineages exist within a clan. Members of a clan will refer to each other as "kwv tij" (brothers), while lineage members will refer to each other as "ib caub kwv tij" (one family brothers). The rights and obligations of mutual hospitality within a clan are especially strong between the lineage members.

At a wider level, the exogamous clans created obligations of inter-village hospitality and cooperation between households of different clans through marriage ties. When a woman married, she was brought under the care of the clan spirits of the husband's clan, which formally made her a member of her husband's clan. However, she would still retain allegiance to her clan of origin, and the clan of her husband was drawn into a special relationship with her clan through the marriage ties (Cooper 1984:40-41; Geddes 1976:47-48). The husband's clan was obligated to cooperate with and to show hospitality to the wife's clan in order not to create ill-feelings between the two clans.

MARRIAGES

Bernatzik noted that because a Hmong man and his family would have paid a considerably large bride price for his bride, the Hmong considered a wife to be the property of her husband. In the Spokane Hmong community, however, informants said that they did not consider the custom of paying a bride price to mean that a woman was the property of her husband. Informants said that the bride price was negotiated between the families involved and indicated that if the families were on

good terms with each other, the bride price was sometimes even waived, especially if there had been good marriage unions created between the two families in the past; their statements concur with Geddes account of customs related to marriage and bride-price customs (Geddes 1976). The parents of the couple being married were expected to provide them with what they would need to establish themselves in their new life together. Arranged marriages, elopements, and marriage by capture (kidnapping of the bride) were common ways for Hmong marriages to occur in Laos.

HMONG TRIBES

Another level of social division exists beyond the clan. Bernatzik refers to these divisions as separate tribes and cites various sources enumerating a large number of Hmong tribes. He cites Scott as one authority, who concluded that there were three principal Hmong tribes: the Red, the White, and the Black (Scott 1932:598, cited in Bernatzik 1970:613). Savina divided the Hmong into six large and four or five small tribes (Savina 1924:187). Cooper acknowledges only two divisions: the White and the Green. (Some authors have translated the Hmong word for this division into "blue"; thus, this division is referred to as the Blue Hmong by some authors) Other common divisions are the Striped and the Flowery. All of these divisions are based on cultural distinctions in color and forms of clothing, and mutually intelligible but distinct dialects containing significant differences in vocabulary and pronunciation. In the community I studied, people referred to themselves as White, Green or Striped Hmong.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Barney states that "the Hmong are not a politically or culturally unified group" even in Xieng Khouang Province (where their numbers are the greatest) (Barney 1967:273). Political power resided with the male household head, and beyond him, traditionally, with the lineage/village head, who had the role of the "tu hua zo". The principles of respect and authority of household heads and elders governed the household units.

As far as the village/lineage head was concerned, first of all, he was the judge in all minor matters between households. As with the head of a household, the village/lineage head would also confer with other males in the village, and those involved in the cases, before coming to decisions. The ideal "tu hua zo" was just and was not a dictator (Bernatzik 1970:69).

In cases where more than one clan was involved in a dispute, a popular assembly would be called. Lemoine, Cooper and Bernatzik all described the political institution of the popular assembly that the Hmong used to govern themselves. The popular assembly was a meeting of the lineage heads, who could be accompanied by other elders that were renowned for their speaking abilities. These meetings took place in the village head's home. Lemoine said that people dreaded having a popular assembly called on their behalf because they were long and drawn out, but once the assembly was called, the parties went at it full force. Debates would last for days and nights. The ideal solution was for the popular assembly to reach a solution where the two parties concerned

could be reconciled. They avoided administering harsh punishment to the guilty party. They looked for a friendly arrangement that the plaintiff could consent to, and where both parties would feel satisfied. (Lemoine 1972:189-90) In speaking of the popular assembly, Lemoine states, "This extremely democratic form of power within the Hmong village community must have presented a problem of categorization to the Central Administration of the Chinese and then the Lao." (Lemoine 1972:188)

The Hmong distinguished between their traditional political leadership and the leadership installed by the French and continued by the Laotian government. They used the Lao term "nai ban" and "long nai ban" to refer to the latter and his assistant. They continued to use their term "tu hua zo" for their lineage heads.

WOMEN'S POWER WITHIN HMONG POLITICAL INSTITUTION

The kinship organization of the Hmong was one of patrilineal descent, and male dominance permeated their authority structure. When a women married she became a member of her husband's clan. After marrying, a woman referred to her father's clan (her original clan) using the same term as her husband, "neejtsa" ("a man's relatives by marriage or a woman's blood relatives after she becomes married") (Heimbach 1979:138; Cooper 1984:40). Lemoine, however, says that a woman would feel an allegiance to both her original clan and her husband's clan. Even though, formally, she was no longer a member of her father's clan, there existed enough ambiguity that a woman could push her husband to bestow rights, obligations and hospitality upon members of her father's clan under the pretext that one owed it to one's allies; those were obligations that her husband was obliged to recognize and respect, especially because exogamous marriages served the function of creating ties and alliances between clans (Lemoine 1972:186).

Although sexual inequality existed and women were considered inferior to men, women's power in the male-dominant authority structure came from the right of protest if badly treated. Cooper notes three forms of institutionalized protest: the first was a verbal warning originating from the woman; the second was for a woman to appeal to her own kinsfolk for help and to initiate divorce; and the third was to commit suicide. The first form of protest might have taken the form of a woman singing of her grievances openly in front of her husband's family in the form of a spontaneous story-telling song. Gossip may also have served as a verbal warning, as Wolf found to be true in rural Taiwan (Wolf 1972)[2].

Cooper says that if a husband ignored his wife's warning or if he had abused his wife too severely, his wife could run away from him and return to her original home. If the wife refused to return to her husband's home, that would be the first step in the initiation of a divorce (Cooper 1984:141). Although actual divorce was rare, Cooper says that he observed that the initiation of divorce preceedings was much more common. He said that women almost always initiated divorce on the grounds of the husband's laziness and cruelty.

If the wife initiated a divorce by refusing to return to her husband's home, the case went to the village headman. (If the village headman was directly related to either party, an unrelated elder would

preside in his place.) The husband had to pay him a fee. He held a court, and everybody could come and give advice, but only the headman made the final decision (Cooper 1984:141). If the headman decided that the case did not merit divorce, he encouraged the wife to return to her husband. In most cases that is what she did, but a woman did have the right to insist on divorce. If she did, her family would be required to return the bride price (or a portion of it) to her husband's family. (The bride price was not an insignificant amount--it was often the major expenditure in a Hmong man's lifetime. Cooper states that forfeiture of it could well condemn a man to a life of bachelorhood.) In the case of divorce, the children would stay with the innocent party (Cooper 1984:142).

A woman would resort to the third form of protest, suicide, when she saw no other way out of a dissatisfactory situation. Traditionally, a woman would eat an overdose of opium (Lemoine 1972:167; Cooper 1984:143). Cooper feels that although three cases of suicide by overdose of opium were noted in 1970, public opinion plays a stronger role in enforcing a husband/wife relationship than either a wife's suicide or a husband's violence. Cooper has an interesting way of viewing this: "A wife's suicide, by the almost poetic means of overdosing on the very product through which she produces surplus value for her husband, would certainly make the husband lose a lot of face and he is most unlikely to find a new wife in the future" (1984:143). Cooper goes on to say, and Lemoine's findings concur with this, that "as a protest of last resort, the possibility, rather than the actuality, of suicide acts as a limitation on the husband's abuse of power" (Cooper 1984:143). Lemoine comments that wives often threaten suicide in the course of "domestic scenes", and then goes on to describe a suicide committed during his field work. In that case the woman hung herself from a tree using her head turban. She committed suicide several days after she had had an argument with her husband in which she had threatened to eat an overdose of opium.

My observations of the Spokane Hmong community indicate that public opinion played and continues to play a strong role in enforcing a husband/wife relationship; however, my impression is that public opinion can be harder on women than men. One informant said that once she attempted suicide because if she complained, she knew what the elders in her family would say and that did not help.

ORIGINS OF THE HMONG

The Hmong were one of many tribal groups interspersed in a mosaic pattern of settlement in the highlands of Laos at the turn of the century. They had migrated from southern China during the 19th century. Until recently the Hmong have had no written history; since the 1960's, however, several historical accounts have been written in English. In 1988, Quincy, a historian, with the help of See Vue, a Hmong refugee in the United States, published a Hmong history in the English language. It is the first Hmong history that I am aware of that is widely available in the United States. Quincy pieced together his book from the published works of missionaries and anthropologists as well as interviews conducted with elderly Hmong. Mottin, a French missionary, linguist, and priest, published a Hmong history in English in 1980, but since the book was published in Thailand, it is not widely known or available in the United States.

Bernatzik writes that the Chinese first mention the Hmong in about 2500 B.C., when they reportedly waged war with them in the Yellow River Valley. From that time on the Hmong disappear and reappear in Chinese history under various names and in various places, until there finally came to be a large number of them in Kweichow province, where the Chinese government apparently claims they originated (Bernatzik 1970:26-29). Bernatzik quotes the German author Von Eickstedt (1943:16) who said that it is only since the Sung period (around 1000 A.D.) that the Chinese began consistently applying the name "miao" to a definite tribal group residing in Kweichow, which are the Hmong (1970:28). Miao, the term the Chinese still use today to refer to the Hmong in China, was historically a general term meaning "barbarian" in Chinese. The Chinese have used the term historically to refer to various tribal peoples. Lowland peoples throughout Southeast Asia have referred to the Hmong as the "Meo". European and American ethnologists, missionaries, and administrations have used these two terms, as well as Meau and the term "Montagnards" to refer to the Hmong people living in North Vietnam. (The term montagnard designates all of those tribal groups who live in the highlands of Vietnam.) The Hmong consider the terms "miao" and "meo" derogatory. The term they use to refer to themselves is "Hmong".

RECENT HISTORY OF THE HMONG IN LAOS

William Smalley, an American missionary/linguist who lived among the Hmong in Laos in the 1950s, has developed a schema to describe the stages of cultural adaptation of the Hmong in Laos in modern historical times. Smalley's schema provides a useful summary of the key periods of Hmong history in Laos.

> 1. Laos penetration stage. The Hmong were moving into Laos from China and North Vietnam. They had to begin to cope with new ethnic groups and new power structures around them, notably those of the Lao and the French.
>
> 2. Laos traditional stage. The Hmong had become a significantly large ethnic group in Laos, but...kept to their mountains as much

as possible, and largely avoided contact with more powerful groups.

3. Laos adaptive stage. The Hmong had established relatively stable relationship patterns with other ethnic groups. The Hmong began seeking to take a more significant place in the larger life of the Lao state.

4. Laos resettlement stage. Due to attacks by the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao, increasing percentages of the Hmong population were forced out of their villages into resettlement conglomerations where they typically mingled with peoples from other ethnic groups. The exercise of some traditional cultural patterns was curtailed. They experienced new cultural forces with great suddeness and intensity.

5. Thailand camp stage.

6. United States resettlement stage.

(Smalley 1986:7-8).

Smalley deliberately did not set dates for these stages; he writes that

> "they are not discrete periods of time, nor did they take place at exactly the same time for all Hmong in all parts of Laos. Some Hmong people...were in the Laos adaptive stage when other[s]...were still in the Laos penetration stage. [However,] most Hmong who have reached the United States...went through all or most of these stages" (1986:8).

While Smalley did not set dates for his stages, I still find it useful to talk about Hmong history with a timeline. Below, I will summarize some of the major events affecting Hmong history since they entered Southeast Asia.

The Hmong migrated into Southeast Asia during the 19th century, into what is today known as North Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma. (Most authors suggest that these migrations were escapes from the repression and domination of the Chinese.) Cooper suggests that they may have migrated because of increasing resource scarcity and population pressure felt in southern China due to the expansion of lowland agriculturists into the higher altitudes that the Hmong cultivated.

In Laos the Hmong settled in unpopulated areas, and generally integrated themselves peacefully into the existing tribal systems of land use, when they settled into areas where other tribal peoples were living. French colonial minister Abadie (1924) describes an instance, however, where the Hmong attacked the local inhabitants in the Tonkin (which today is North Vietnam), but, then, did not inhabit the land they had conquered, so the defeated peoples moved back onto the land. He writes that this was because the lowland climate was not to their liking (1924:149).

We hear of the Hmong fighting again in a rebellion, which apparently only took place among the Hmong in Laos, when it was a French Protectorate. It lasted from 1918 until 1921. The French missionary Savina (who combined the roles of missionary and administrator according to Cooper) drew up a statute where the French would appoint Hmong chiefs rather than Lao or Thai to rule over Hmong areas as delegates of the French authority, and this convinced the Hmong to stop fighting.

Savina's statement regarding the Hmong and this revolt reveals a negative attitude the French administration may have had toward the Hmong:

> "We are talking about a people who are out of their element, who are living in a situation that is visibly abnormal, who are suffering from some unknown evil that we should try to get to know if we want to heal it...
>
> Everyone Knows that in effect, first of all, the Miao are not owners of the land they cultivate; they are tenants of the land, a parasitic people; secondly, they cannot administer themselves and they depend on foreign administrators; they are serfs, an acephalous people...
>
> The Miao people have always revolted because they are a people without property, without a home and without a head (leader); the day when the Miao can say: this field is mine, this country is mine, this is my chief, he will no longer rebel...
>
> Only the presence of the French prevented a mass revolt of the Miao. If we had not been there to intervene, they would have quickly liberated themselves from the servitude of the Thai of the Black River and thrown the subjects of the King of Luang Prabang in the Mekong River!" (Savina 1924:235-239) (my translation)

It is difficult from this statement to determine Savina's meaning. He seems to consider the reason for the Hmong revolts throughout history as efforts to control a land base, yet at the same time he criticizes them for not owning land. From the Hmong's perspective the cause of the uprising was the French government's employment of ethnic Laotians to collect taxes from the Hmong. Prior to that time the Hmong had lived autonomously to a large extent, and they disliked ethnic Lao tax collectors who cheated them and mistreated them. The uprising left the Hmong with the right to appoint their own chiefs to represent themselves to the French administration. This situation continued until the Japanese began occupation of Laos in 1941.

By the time the French mustered up the energy to create a resistance movement to the Japanese occupation of Laos, they were able to enlist Hmong cooperation. The Hmong cooperated with the Laotian central government forces in resisting the Japanese by providing intelligence and guerrilla support for the French commando forces who had parachuted onto the Plaine of Jarres (Barney 1967; Quincy 1988:136-137). When the Japanese began encountering resistance originating from France, they encouraged the Laotian government to declare independence from French rule. Laos did so in 1945; the new government was the government of the Lao Issara ("Free Laos"). After

WWII ended, the French colonial government re-established itself in Laos (after some struggle with the Laotian army), and the Lao Issara government went into exile in Thailand. It is out of the issue of who would control the Laotian people and territory that the Laotian Civil War began in the 1950's.

It was during that same time period after World War II that a national Hmong leadership emerged, divided into two factions. Touby Lyfong became the leader of the faction officially recognized by the French-backed Royal Laotian government. This faction began cooperating with the French/Lao military and civilian authorities, and through that cooperation a sense of participation in the Lao state began to emerge (Smalley 1986:16). Members of the faction Lyfong represented began cooperating with the United States Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) in the formation of the C.I.A.-supported "secret army"; the C.I.A. recruited Vang Pao, a young and influential Hmong man who was an officer in the Royal Lao Armed Forces to be in charge of the "secret army", which they armed, trained and advised. It was Vang Pao's responsibility to recruit soldiers for his army; he recruited most Hmong males over 16 years of age (from Lyfong's faction) to fight in the covert C.I.A. operation. Vang Pao was in charge of the entire military Region II, which was where the majority of all the Hmong tribespeople in Laos lived. The United States Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.) supported the Hmong soldiers' families, which numbered 120,000 people, who had become refugees due to the fighting. Air America was under contract to airdrop rice, other food rations, and arms. They also flew out sick and wounded persons, and airlifted refugees. The C.I.A. paid off women who became widows (NBC program "The Forgotten War", 1966). Garrett reported that as many as 250,000 Hmong sided with the Royal Lao government in the civil war (Garrett 1974:83).

Faydang Lobliayao (Lo Fay Dang) became the officially recognized leader of the rival faction, cooperating with the Pathet Lao. (I am not aware of any published information regarding the size of the Lobliayao faction. However, one of my informants estimated that it was about one fifth of the Hmong population in Laos.) The anti-colonialist Pathet Lao, which was what the military force of the Souphanouvong minority faction of the exiled Lao Issara government came to be called, in turn, made an agreement with the Vietminh, which allowed Vietnamese troops to operate within Pathet Lao territory (Adams 1970:119-120). There were numerous Hmong settlements in the highlands of the territory that the Pathet Lao claimed to control (Porter 1970:186,209-211). Informants told me that programs the Pathet Lao implemented included conscription of Hmong youth into their guerrilla units and extraction of "taxes" in the form of food and crops from the villagers. Understandably, many Hmong strongly disliked the Pathet Lao, and when they heard promises that the Americans were going to help the Hmong obtain their own independent territory in Laos, many men eagerly joined Vang Pao's army. (According to Barney, the C.I.A. promised the Hmong an autonomous Hmong state in return for their help in fighting the Vietnamese in Laos [Barney 1967:275]).

The sixties and the early seventies was the time period when the Americans became involved in the war and the Hmong participation became

intense. In a speech made at the University of Minnesota in May, 1987, Air Force Captain Timothy N. Castle describes how the U.S.-Hmong alliance came to be:

> "The U.S. had...found a group of stubborn, independent and aggressive people who would fight [: the Hmong]...With the support of the U.S., this new force would be airlifted into communist controlled areas of northeastern Laos [and into North Vietnam in later years]...to observe and harass enemy units as much as possible...[and] to conduct surveillance of supply routes [the Ho Chi Minh Trail] carrying materials into Laos and South Vietnam" (Castle, 1987).

Castle went on to say: "The Hmong have paid a severe price for their assistance to the United States...During the 15 years of war, the Hmong suffered 30,000 dead, out of a population of about 300,000" (Castle, 1987).

C.I.A. covert operations commander Edgar "Pops" Buell, who guided Vang Pao's ground forces (Morris and Churchill, 1987), confirmed this in a memo he wrote in March, 1968:

> "V.P. [Vang Pao] has lost at least a thousand men since January 1, killed alone, and I don't know how many more wounded. He's lost all but one of his commanders...A short time ago we rounded up 300 fresh recruits. Thirty percent were 14 years old or less, and ten of them were only ten years old. Another 30 percent were 15 and 16. The remaining 40 percent were 35 or over. Where were the ones in between? I'll tell you, they're all dead...and in a few weeks, 90 percent of them [the new recruits] will be killed" (Shaplen 1969:348).

Not only soldiers were killed. The Pathet Lao viewed the Hmong as bandits, especially because they continued to resist domination by the Pathet Lao and to receive assistance from the United States after the Geneva Agreement of 1962, to which the U.S. was a signatory and which declared that all foreign military advisers would be withdrawn from Laos. Castle described an attack that took place in the middle of an August night of 1966. An estimated 400 North Vietnamese soldiers slaughtered 1300 Hmong who had stopped to rest for the night while making their way to a refugee camp. Castle said that "Women and girls were raped and disemboweled. Parents killed young by feeding them pieces of raw opium to avoid having them clubbed to death by the Vietnamese. Old women and men were shot in the legs and left to die...The mountain tribes had come to know the price of alliance with America" (Castle, 1987). Shaplen also describes this atrocity in a similar manner (Shaplen 1969:349).

A cease-fire was called and a coalition government was formed in 1973, which drew an end to the Laotian Civil War and marked the beginning of the U.S. pullout of its forces in Southeast Asia. When the Vietnamese-backed Pathet Lao took control of the government in 1975, General Vang Pao left Laos for Thailand. Thousands of Hmong who had

supported or been a part of Vang Pao's army began fleeing Laos. If they were able to reach the Thai border alive, the Thai government placed them in a refugee camp. Refugee camps on the Thai border swelled to tens of thousands. Reports of chemical warfare (yellow rain) being used to annihilate the Hmong on their mountaintops surfaced from the refugees showing up at the Thai border in the early 1980's. (A State Department pamphlet on Laos states that early reports of chemical warfare being used against the Hmong were backed up with material evidence.)

For a more detailed account of the history of the Hmong in Laos, see Quincy 1988.

REFUGEE STATUS: THE BASIS FOR RESETTLEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES

As indicated above, during the Laotian Civil War, the Hmong people's involvement with the C.I.A. cost them the loss of approximately 30,000 lives out of a population estimated to be 300,000 in Laos. Since 1975, more than 130,000 Hmong people have fled persecution in Laos and become refugees. If the Thai government does not turn the Hmong away at the border, they are placed in refugee camps under the jurisdiction of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, and become officially recognized as refugees. As refugees, the Hmong are allowed to apply for resettlement in a third country, referred to as a country of second asylum.

Community organizations, often church-sponsored, work through Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS), in resettling refugees to the United States. Refugees without any family ties in the United States are known as "free cases". Refugee families who have resettled in communities in the United States often work through church-backed refugee resettlement agencies to bring other family members to the same community that they are living in. That process is known as "family reunification". Initially, most Hmong refugees arrived in the United States under the sponsorship of churches as "free cases". At the present time, however, most Hmong arriving to the United States are "family reunification" cases of sponsorship. In "family reunification" cases, the relatives already residing in the American community assume most of the burden of orienting newcomers. Churches provide mostly initial financial and material support for the newcomer family.

Many of the Hmong currently living in the United States are veterans or families of veterans who fought with the C.I.A.-supported "secret army". They often fought with the C.I.A. because the Americans promised to help them obtain an independent territory in Laos--one where they could be free of discrimination from the ethnic Laotians who monopolized the political power in Laos along with the French prior to the Laotian Civil War.

RESETTLEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES

The United States policy of resettlement has been to scatter refugees throughout the United States in order to lessen the impact of resettled refugees on any given community and to play down the presence of the refugees in the United States. The policy has attempted to rapidly transform the Hmong individual into a socially integrated, English-speaking, self-supporting American citizen (U.S. Congress,

1980). However, after Hmong families are sponsored to various parts of the country, there has been a great deal of secondary migration. The organization of the Hmong social structure by patrilineal kinship, and the reciprocity and redistribution norms that that entails, has been a key factor in secondary migration of Hmong families. Faced with surviving in America on their own, the Hmong have resorted to a strategy that has worked for them for generations--forming family clusters by moving to communities where they have kinship ties is a logical choice for individual Hmong families considering their options. In the larger Hmong communities, the Hmong can interact with other Hmong. The large Hmong communities have also eased the burden of adjustment, the pressure to learn English, and provided a measure of familiarity in an otherwise wholy alien environment, just as the "little Italies" and "Chinatowns" did for previous immigrant populations in the United States.

CHANGES IN CULTURAL PATTERNS OCCURRING IN THE UNITED STATES

While arranged marriages, elopements and marriage by capture (kidnapping of the bride) still occur in the United States, marriage by capture is decreasing. Since polygyny, which was an accepted form of marriage in Laos, is illegal in the United States, a category of "throw away" brides has emerged as some men chose resettlement with only one of their wives. Other polygynous marriages have survived resettlement to the United States intact when the husbands claimed one of their wives as a sister. In other cases, widowed women who have become "throw-away" brides or who have chosen not to re-marry or to leave polygynous marriages, resettle to the United States with their children. (These women are often overlooked in the research on refugees and in refugee assistance programs because researchers and service-providers expect to be dealing with male heads of households.) In the United States, the patrilineal kinship-reckoning pattern continues, but the patrilocal pattern of residence is much less common. Exogamy between clans is still practiced, and one still observes cooperation and hospitality between households of different clans on account of marriage ties. Whether a woman is brought under the care of the clan spirits of the husband's clan upon marriage depends largely on whether the families involved are still practicing the traditional Hmong religion. Some families converted to Christianity while still living in Laos; others have converted to Christianity since resettling to the United States. While divorces among Hmong couples may be more common in the United States, public opinion continues to play a strong role in enforcing the husband/wife relationship. Women are gaining more experience outside of the domestic realm as they hold jobs or access educational opportunities. Male informants in this study did not demonstrate hostility towards women, and appeared to view them as "workmates" in the enterprise of raising their family. Several male informants in this study expressed the opinion that women should have equal access to education and that women were not inferior to men.

CHAPTER 3 NOTES

1. While Bernatzik and Geddes indicated that polygyny was rather commonly practiced by the Hmong (Geddes 1976:83; Bernatzik 1970), Lee states that it was strongly condemned (Lee 1986:66).

2. This is a realm that I have not seen explored and in my opinion deserves further research.

CHAPTER 4. HMONG VIEW OF PARENTING

UNDERSTANDING HMONG PARENTING VALUES

In this chapter, I preface the analysis of my research data with some information that is important for understanding Hmong parenting values. First of all, I discuss the variation that existed among informants' views of parenting. Then, I discuss the main concerns of parents in this study. After that, I describe aspects of the traditional Hmong culture that have a bearing on parenting values and survival strategies Hmong are employing in the United States. The remainder of the chapter is a description and analysis of the research data obtained through the methods described in Chapter 2. The goal of this study was to obtain information pertaining to the Hmong view of the family (from parents' perspectives), including parental roles by gender, what parents felt was important to teach their children, parental frustrations derived from children's behavior and Hmong views of disciplining children.

SEVERAL HMONG VIEWS OF THE FAMILY

Most of the Hmong parents I spoke to expressed values in line with those of the past when it came to gender roles and expectations for how children should behave. However, it also became apparent I was dealing with several Hmong views of the family. In talking with parents about their own and their children's roles in the family, and their concerns and problems encountered in raising their children in the United States, I found one group who expressed views in harmony with the Hmong family system as described in the published literature on the Hmong in Southeast Asia (by Yang 1975; Bernatzik 1970; Lemoine 1972; Lee 1981; and Cooper 1984), and another group whose views regarding how to interact with children and regarding gender roles have changed. In general, the former group were the older generation of Hmong parents and those with little or no formal education and who lacked fluency in English, while the latter group tended to be younger and have more formal education and fluency in English. For the purposes of this discussion I will refer to the former group as the "older generation" and to the latter group as the "middle generation" (since they are the middle generation of Hmong parents in the U.S.--between the oldest group of parents who has come the U.S. and the youngest group, who have grown up in the United States).

TWO MAJOR CONCERNS: MONEY-GATHERING AND YOUTH HAVE TOO MUCH FREEDOM

Nearly all of the parents in this study expressed two concerns: 1) getting enough money to meet their family's needs (which I will refer to as money-gathering) and 2) that the children growing up in the U.S. have too much freedom. Money-gathering is especially a concern for parents who have little education and whose skills are not highly valued in the American economy. In general, those parents also have more children and less English and fewer skills to support their children in this country. The concern that children have too much freedom is most common among

parents who have lived in the U.S the longest (10 to 14 years) and those who have school-age children. The concern that children have too much freedom is examined in detail in the section "Frustrations and Problems Rearing Children in the United States".

The money-gathering concern and the feeling of helplessness in controlling children work like undercurrents influencing the values of the Hmong parents in my study. They tend to permeate the community of Hmong parents, creating points of commonality across the generations of parents. They may very well be the same as the concerns of many middle class Anglo-American parents in America, however, I have found that the worldview of the family fueling those concerns for Hmong refugee parents is very different from what it is for middle class Anglo-American parents. I have argued that the parenting values of the Hmong in this study are an integral part of the survival strategy their families used in Laos and that in Laos their survival strategy was interwoven with their traditional socio-economy. Therefore, to understand Hmong parenting values in the United States, one needs to understand the foundational principles of the Laotian Hmong socio-economy.

HMONG SUBSISTENCE-LEVEL SOCIO-ECONOMY BASED ON KINSHIP AND SOCIAL STATUS

As indicated in Chapter 3, the Hmong had a subsistence-level economy in Laos. In their subsistence economy, kinship defined one's economic and social obligations to others (who shared what with whom) and one's gender defined the work one did. There was also a social hierarchy that defined who obeyed whom. In the social hierarchy, the oldest generation held the highest status, so younger generations were always expected to show respect to and obey their elders. Men held higher status than women, so women were supposed to show deference to men. Children held the lowest status in the social hierarchy because they were the youngest. Therefore, parents expected their children to obey and show deference to them because the children were "under" the parents.

One of the ways women showed deference to men was by not voicing their opinions in public discussions. The public sphere--the domain outside the home--was the men's sphere of responsibility. Thus, even though women may have held opinions regarding decisions that would affect the general welfare of the family, they were expected to not speak out in public. Some men consulted their wives and other women in their family before making decisions, but women did not take part in public discussions and were supposed to make it appear that the men made the decisions that were beyond the domestic domain. For a woman to speak out would be overstepping her bounds, and in such situations, men would be within their rights to put such a woman in her place through criticism. Just as men would have been within their rights to put an outspoken woman in her place, parents were within their rights to put a disrespectful or disobedient child in her/his place.

To summarize, in the traditional Hmong culture, one's age, sex and kin relationships determined one's social and economic position in relation to the members of the rest of the group and proper behavior for interacting with people both within and without the group. In other words, kinship and gender and, thus, family roles were defined in a

specific way in order to ensure the survival of the group; each person's tasks were defined by her/his sex and by her/his place within the family and the kinship group. (Yang 1975:68)

The way Hmong people have described their former lives in Laos to me was that the family worked together to raise food for the family. Each season and day of the year the family had certain tasks to accomplish. Men, women, boys and girls each had their own tasks and each person knew what those tasks were and what her/his part was in providing for the family's needs. The tasks weren't negotiated; if they had been, it could have jeopardized the family's survival. However, from my research and from a review of the published anthropological literature on the Hmong (see Cooper 1984), it seems apparent that there has been and continues to be room for flexibility in the system if the change will benefit the family's well-being.

In addition to one's day-to-day responsibilities to one's immediate family, kinship relations also defined broader-based social obligations of reciprocity and hospitality with others. In Laos, exchanges of indirect reciprocity played a crucial role in social relationships and survival in times of need. In state-level societies like the United States with market (cash-based) economies and centralized governments, the government may be able to provide public assistance to those in need and social security to the disabled and elderly. In kinship-based systems like that of the Hmong, it is the family that must provide for those in need of help. Kinship relationships, which define one's obligations, therefore, include the same functions as government assistance bureaucracies do in centralized governments.

TRANSITION TO A CASH-BASED MARKET ECONOMY

As was indicated in Chapter 3, during the first part of this century the Hmong participated in a limited cash economy with Chinese traders (Yang 1975:67) and towards the middle of this century they had begun participating more and more in the Laotian cash economy (Smalley 1986). The U.S. recruitment of Hmong men and boys to fight in Laos left many Hmong women, children and elderly with little choice but to participate in the Laotian cash economy or perish because in the war zones raising one's food by farming became impossible.

Prior to the 1960's, most Hmong families used opium or silver for the purchase of a small number of needed goods they did not produce themselves--salt, wax, thread, cloth, oil, medicines, etc. Certainly, having cash to participate in the cash economy of Laos was a desirable thing, and was becoming an increasing part of the lives of Laotian Hmong who have since resettled in the U.S. However, the following statements regarding money made by individuals of various ages and both sexes lead me to believe that the transition to the cash-based market economy of the United States is a major point of stress for the majority of the Hmong parents in my study.

A thirty-one-year-old mother[1]:

> "I think you know that here most people work so that they got money to raise children. And, in our country, most of the people

"ua teb" [did farming], and they raised animals. They sell the animals and got money. So, you [sic] "ua teb" so they have their own food, so they don't have to buy [their food].

...[In Laos, you needed money] just for clothes and for something you really need. In here, must buy everything. Food and clothes and nothing free. I don't know because in our country, you can build your own house. You not pay the rent because you build you own house. So, you keep money, save money. And like you work and get paid one thousand per month, so you get all one thousand. So, you not like [in] this country [where] you have to pay tax, you have to pay social security, things like that.

And there's no electricity. If we in the city, yes. [We were] not in the city, so no [electricity]. Use wood for cook. You [sic] just buy the candle."

A sixty-two-year-old father:

"Here you spend too much money. On bills—hospital, household bills. $1500 to $2000 to have a baby. In Laos, don't pay anything. Babies born at home. In Laos it's kind of hard that they don't have hospital, but it's okay, too."

A woman in her late forties:

"[In Laos] just buy clothes; [we] grow own food. Just buy once or twice year. Everyone goes together and buys what they like. Here, we have to pay for everything...Life difficult for the money."

By taking into consideration the socio-economic context of the Hmong in Laos, Hmong parenting values can be better understood. It is within that framework that I analyze and describe values of Hmong parents, especially those that differ from current middle-class Anglo-American family values.

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE UNITED STATES

The "older generation" of Hmong parents, skilled in survival in the highlands of Laos, are not practicing subsistence-level farming in the United States. It seems, however, that they are employing the strategies of family solidarity and cooperation similar to those they used in Laos to enhance their families' survival here. Whole families cooperate in money-gathering ventures such as picking huckleberries in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest. Those with the least English are often the best pickers. Family members who know the American system better and who have better English may locate buyers for the huckleberries. Women also market handiwork for relatives in refugee camps in Thailand as another way to generate income. Among the older generation, there is little variation in outlook on family relations and obligations.

For the "middle generation"--those who have become parents after leaving Laos--there appear to be two repertoires of values from which to draw in working out a strategy for survival in the cash-based market economy of the United States. Thus, there is more variation in parenting styles. Because members of the "middle generation" also have some education and fluency in English, they are able to forge survival strategies in the U.S. slightly different from those of the "older generation" of Hmong parents. Members of the "middle generation" have some training under the kinship-based subsistence economy of Laos, though their own personal circumstances may have changed and they may not have spent many years living within the context of the traditional subsistence-level economy that their parents had. The families of many of the individuals in the "middle generation" had given up farming and fled the fighting of the war when they were youngsters. Many of the families of this generation had moved either to the Laotian capital (Vientiane) or to a refugee town like Long Cheng, which had grown up around the CIA headquarters on the Plain of Jarres. Families at Long Cheng had become dependent on food drops for survival and often had begun participating in the market economy of Laos selling goods and foods to make a living. One woman in her thirties told me that her mother told her that her family began fleeing the Communists when she was just 4 days old.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Living arrangements conducive to cooperation and mutual assistance between parents and their married children and between married siblings are an important survival strategy used by members of both the "older" and "middle generations". In that way, living arrangements are an extension of survival strategies these Hmong families employed in the Laotian environment. Traditionally, one informant told me, all of the brothers in a family would remain in the same house even after they married and had children--providing that there was enough cultivatable land available to supply the extended family's food needs and provided that the people got along well enough. She said, "My family and my husband's older brother's family--the whole family have to stay together."

Although it was not common to find married brothers and parents living under one roof in the community I studied, it was common for married children to live near their parents and for married siblings to live near to one another. In the case of one family who resides in a government-subsidized apartment complex, two brothers live in apartments that are side by side, duplex style, and a third lives across the parking lot in another unit. In the case of another family, three brothers and their families are buying houses that are all within a few blocks of each other. The parents of these brothers live in a house next door to one of them. The three brothers are buying the house for their parents. In yet another case, four families rent apartments in an older apartment house. Three of the families are related through the male side of the family. The fourth family is related to the other three through marriage: their son married a woman who is a member of the lineage of the other three families.

The number of married sons and the number of married daughters living nearby their parents was about equally divided in the community I studied. Traditionally, according to the anthropological literature on the Hmong and to the Hmong's stated ideals, the son continues living with his parents after he marries, but the daughter and her husband should go and live with his parents (Lee 1981, 1986; Cooper 1984; Lemoine 1972). While anthropologists have classified the Hmong as traditionally having a patrivirilocal pattern of residence, in the United States, a neolocal residence pattern is more common. Cooper cited examples of patriuxorilocality in his study of the Hmong in Thailand, as a response to resource scarcity (Cooper 1984). In the United States, it seems that newly-married Hmong couples are responding to the situation of "money-scarcity" by choosing to live with or near family members who live in areas where there are the best employment and educational opportunities and where the family can do the best financially. For example, a couple in this study lived with the wife's parents so that the wife's mother could assist with childcare, enabling both her daughter and her son-in-law to work and go to school. Many of the Hmong families in my study were not averse to making changes in their living arrangements whenever more attractive circumstances presented themselves. In a case of family reunification[2], one of my informants was sponsored by a church to come to Spokane, Washington, where her parents were living, but, within six months after she and her family arrived to Spokane, they moved to Wisconsin because her husband had relatives there. About six months later, she and her husband and children moved back to Spokane so her husband could continue his education there because the community college in Wisconsin would not recognize the credits he had earned from the community college in Spokane. In the case of another informant, he and his wife moved to Wisconsin and then to California before returning to the city where they had both gone to high school because they thought "it was a better place for the children". Another informant told me of how she and her family had moved to Colorado; her husband had received job training there and then they returned to Spokane, where this woman's mother lived.

In most contexts, moves were made because other relatives could promise better living conditions, jobs, educational opportunities or support in their communities. I have never heard of a family moving to a new area of the country without some relatives in the area from the same clan or some who were from the wife's clan who could help them out. Informants have told me that some persons move from one area to another because they have lost face in the community where they had been living, but, normally, even they would move to an area where they could get support from other relatives.

UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Another survival strategy employed by parents from both the "older" and "middle generations", who had little or no education and limited English, is the utilization of public assistance programs. Some parents who had worked prior to coming to the United States were eligible for the Family Independence Program (FIP). FIP enables parents to acquire education so that they can obtain marketable skills. Another public

assistance program utilized is TRACK 2. TRACK 2 allows its participants to work part-time and to study part-time as well. The main concern of parents who have limited English and little or no education is supporting their families. Often the jobs they can find are doing yardwork, picking or packaging for produce farms, doing housework, homecare for elderly, baby-sitting, housekeeping for hotels, etc. In most cases, those jobs pay minimum wage, have no medical benefits and offer little long-term security.

In the Spokane Hmong community, where the main problem in the American environment is a lack of financial resources, parents from both the "middle" and "older generations" are changing their values when it becomes apparent that doing so will be advantageous to their family's economic well-being. However, as described in the next section, parenting values are changing in different ways depending on the survival strategy of the parents and whether they are living below the poverty level. The parents who are changing their values the most are those with the most education--those who can obtain jobs that pay them enough to support their families above the poverty level.

The younger generation of Hmong, many of whom have not yet become parents, have very few, if any, memories of Laos and, thus, no memories of living in the traditional kinship-based subsistence-level socio-economy. Their childhood memories are of growing up and attending schools in the United States. Their only knowledge of the life patterns of the traditional subsistence-level economy is only through what their parents, older siblings, and other relatives have recounted to them. However, they do generally have firsthand experience of growing up within cohesive families where obligations to the kin group has remained the norm. I informally interviewed members of this younger generation. I did not survey or formally interview this future generation of Hmong parents because it was beyond the scope of this study. However, interviews with this generation will be essential as they become parents themselves because I believe that their views of parenthood will not be represented in this study.

PARENTAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The word for parental responsibilities in Hmong is "niam txiv kev tswv hwm [cov me nyuam]", which literally means the path whereby the mother and father manage and protect [the children]. Following this path by providing for their children and also teaching the children how to fulfill their roles within the Hmong kinship system are the main responsibilities parents have in raising their children. Traditionally, parents had help in raising their children; Bernatzik reported that grandparents had prime responsibility in the rearing of children among the Hmong, and that older siblings also devoted much time to watching their younger siblings (Bernatzik 1970:90-92, 117). In the Spokane community, I observed that grandparents, and especially grandmothers, continue to play an important role in providing childcare for their grandchildren, if they live in the same area as their children. I also observed that older siblings played an important role in providing childcare and in showing their younger siblings what is expected of

them. Most parents agreed (93% of those surveyed) that children should help take care of their younger siblings. Because some informants' parents had not come to the United States and because most couples had neolocal residence patterns in the United States, the parents in my study as a whole had less access to their parents for childcare assistance. Based on what informants told me, it also seemed that they could depend less on their older children for childcare than their parents and grandparents had; however, they still attempted to make use of those resources for assistance in child-rearing as much as possible.

PARENTAL ROLES BY GENDER

When interviewing parents, I asked them what it meant to be a good father or a good mother. Not surprisingly, Hmong informants perceive parental roles as being different for males and females with the common goal being the welfare of the children. In most cases, informants perceived the mother's primary responsibility to be taking care of the children, while the father's primary role was to provide material support for the mother and children.

A "GOOD" MOTHER

Each parent interviewed emphasized different aspects of the jobs a good mother must do. Below I present some of the more commonly mentioned aspects.

A woman who has had 12 children and who is in her fifties described a good mother as follows: "[She] cooks, takes care of the children, the house, the garden, the clothes and the guests."

Another aspect of a mother's roles was covered by a father in his sixties: "...[she] must take care of the children, see to it that they are not sick or take care of them when they are, and then the children will grow up good."

A good mother was also supposed to be a moral instructor to the children by setting a good example for her children. More than one mother with several pre-schoolers found this a tall order to fill in the isolated nuclear family pattern of residence they are following in the United States. A mother of a newborn infant and two pre-schoolers who is in her early twenties told me rather frankly: "A good mother is supposed to talk nicely to her kids and tell them to do nice things for them to know, but I can't do that. They make me crazy. Sometimes they don't listen to me."

A married woman in her early thirties who has three children described a mother's roles as threefold: "...one is, you have to take care good the children; two is, you have to keep your house clean all the time in case you have guests; three is, you have to--I don't know about your culture--but in our culture, the woman have to take care her husband."

From the above informant's description of a mother's roles, it becomes apparent that Hmong mothers do not separate their roles of mother and wife as American women may be more prone to do. Taking care of one's family encompasses taking care of the children's needs as well as those of one's husband. Hmong women's roles as mothers are not unlike those of women in all of Southeast Asia in that they include

being a wife, daughter-in-law and mother. Smith describes a married woman's roles in Vietnam: "Throughout her marriage a woman is expected to be dutiful and respectful toward both her husband and his parents. The wife is expected to become an integral part of her husband's family, to care for him and their children and to perform all household duties" (Smith 1967:115). Hmong women's primary responsibilities were to take care of the needs of their children and husband and to take care of domestic tasks; however, Hmong women were also expected to and did contribute a very significant portion of the labor to the family's subsistence needs.

These traditional values hold true for many of the Hmong parents in this study. The exceptions seem to be families where one or both of the parents have professional jobs where they are in close contact with the middle-class Anglo-American value system and parents who attended American public schools.

That women rather than men were traditionally expected to do the cooking is reflected in a statement made by a male informant in his forties who is the father of eight children: "In Laos, a man's wife not home, he can go to his relatives or neighbors and say, 'my wife is not home, can you cook something for my eat?'"

A "GOOD" FATHER

Most informants stressed the father's role as provider foremost, and secondly as disciplinarian. An informant in her early twenties told me that a Hmong father's responsibilities are "...to work, earn the money, and help his wife with anything she can't do, such as heavy work. A husband's responsibility just to earn the money, so when he comes home, he just helps the wife with what's left; but not his responsibility to do the housework."

A man in his early sixties, who is the father of 12 children and who came to the U.S. with his wife and five youngest children only two years ago after a 13-year stay in Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand, describes a good father's roles as follows: "A good father provides food and money to take care of the children."

In addition to being the provider of money, informants surveyed indicated that the father should take the leading role in disciplining the children, especially the sons. Some mothers indicated that if they told their teenage sons what to do or if they asked them questions, the sons tended to ignore them, so they thought it was better for the father to discipline their sons, especially as they got older. A mother in her thirties reported that the father's roles included seeing to it that his children were following the "good path". She said: "He needs to make sure the children do only the good things...If he saw something a little different, so he have to talk and tell the children. That's how he teaches the children to do only the good things."

A widowed mother indicated to me that her role as parent was doubly hard because she had to take on the responsibilities that a father would normally have: "If a woman has a husband, it is important that they work very hard to help each other. If me only, I must work very hard. Like myself, one or two weeks, children and myself have to sit down and talk. Children do something they like, so important for good mother to

watch what they are doing and make sure they do things right, and if not, I have to tell them."

Another role that Lemoine reported the father had traditionally was caring for toddlers about 3 to 5 years of age, especially when the mother was occupied with a newborn infant (Lemoine 1972:166, 169). On numerous occasions I have observed fathers taking care of their pre-school age children, either changing their diapers, playing with them or watching them play. At one point during an interview with a couple and their married son, who was the father of two toddlers, the young father got a small broom and swept up the rice that his youngest son and his youngest brother had spit out and spilled onto the carpet while they were eating. Later on, he excused himself to take his older toddler upstairs to change his diaper. He was watching his two boys while his wife ran an errand. (She was bringing a load of huckleberries to the food locker that they had rented for storage until they could find buyers.) When his wife returned, she gave her husband a diaper without saying a word and then picked up their younger son and left again. The husband then excused himself and took their older son upstairs and changed his diaper. A little while later his wife returned with bottles for both of the children; she put both of the boys down for naps on their grandmother's couch as I continued interviewing her husband and his parents.

CHANGING GENDER ROLES

The following quote from a female informant illustrates what some of a mother's roles were in Laos and how her roles as a mother are changing in her life in the United States:

> "Like, in the morning, we don't have hot water our country, we have to boil water in the morning for your [sic] husband to...brush teeth and wash face. You [sic] have to keep his clothes clean...
>
> Now I do a little different. We have hot water, so I don't have to boil water for my husband. And sometimes I cook for him, sometimes he cooks...But now change a little bit...I have to teach him. I say do do do this when I am gone so you can cook.
>
> You know, the first time I went to visit my cousin [in] Wassau, Wisconsin, he doesn't know how to cook so he took my two boys to go to the McDonald's all the time. Like that. Just had hamburgers or something. So when I returned, so my son say, 'Mommy, do you know what? My father never never cook, so we just go out out out. He doesn't know how to cook.'
>
> So I say, 'Learn'."

In most households I have observed that the mother or the daughter(s) still prepare the meals; however, as the above quote illustrates, roles are changing somewhat. They may change even more drastically in some households in the future because several informants reported that they thought it was important for both their sons and daughters to help with domestic chores. A mother in her forties told me: "I think important teach...them whether they are a boy or girl to wash dishes, do laundry

and help out, so when they get older, they will know how to do that." The same informant told me, "Usually fishing and hunting for men. Usually women do laundry or dishes. Boys have to say, 'You're a girl, you do that', but I don't let them do that. One day Shoua [her daughter] dishes, Xiong [her son] laundry; next, Shoua laundry, Xiong dishes. Xiong likes to cook, so he does that more."

A woman who has only sons still at home had this to say:

> "I think this country the son is a little free, free time because they didn't have job. But the girl, most the girl cook, so they don't have [as much free time]...If I have a daughter, so most the time my daughter have to do that, but I don't have daughter, so now my son, he can help me do that, too.
> ...Folding the clothes and sometimes he knows how to help me because I go to school, too, so I don't have too much time. So, at night, he knows help me to take a bath for the little one and get him to bed, get the bottle for him, so he know how to help me. So, sometime I put--we have a lots clothes, so he help me to choose and wash. He knows how to separate the clothes, and wash and fold for me, too. So, sometimes he help me to cook."

Since I began attending Hmong community functions six years ago, I have noticed that purchased fried chicken has begun showing up at some of these events. In the first few years, families brought traditional, homemade Hmong food. It is likely that as more mothers are working they have less time to spend preparing foods for these functions or it may be that they purchase fried chicken because their children like it.

HOSPITALITY

In the Hmong culture, as in many other Southeast Asian cultures, hospitality ranks high in value. The whole family must make guests feel welcome, but it is the women's role to see to it that the physiological needs of guests are met. A Hmong man told me, "In Laos, in [the] country[-side], [you] don't have to pay for food, for lodging. Hmong people cannot [ask you to] pay". A woman described that aspect of her responsibilities in the following manner: "If your husband takes company to your house, then you have to...take care the guests until they leave. If they spend the night, then you have to cook, to do everything [for them]."

An informant in her early twenties who went to school in the United States told me: "I was raised with traditional way. Like you welcome other people to your house--guests. If I go to see my mom, she makes a feast, invites people to come. I don't feel comfortable if I don't do the same [when relatives from California come to Spokane]."

A statement made about what it is important to teach children by a mother in her forties indicates that the Hmong think it is important that even children know how to make guests feel welcome in their homes: "When they (the children) grow up, [it is important that] they know how to say when people come."

On more than one occasion when I was visiting informants in their homes, one of their children would prepare and serve drinks for me and the adults present.

HONESTY AND TRUST

Trust was mentioned as an important quality in the relationship between a husband and his wife and also between the parents and their children. Several female informants pointed out to me that it was very important to be honest. If a woman lied and got caught, the wife would be seen as "very bad". It was explained that then the husband could no longer trust his wife and, even worse, she would have set a very bad example for her children. That was seen as a very sad situation. Informants told me that in Laos, women usually stayed home more and men went out more, while, in this country, women have more freedom to go places. They attribute their newly acquired freedom to getting their driver's licenses. Since women have more freedom in this country, they felt it was even more important to be honest and keep their word, so as not to lose the trust of their husbands.

Regarding trust, one woman said this: "Don't lie to your children, husband or parents. Example, if I say to my husband, I go to Drou's house and he call and I not there. If children do that, then you don't trust them anymore. It's the same with your husband. That's really a problem [when spouses lose trust]. Next time she's there and I don't believe her. With kids, not really a problem, but with husband and wife, really a problem. Makes problems for the whole family."

One woman even went so far as saying that a husband's role included "making sure that his wife did not have a boyfriend." Numerous female informants reported stories of husbands suspicious that their wives had boyfriends. One informant, a single woman, told me that when she attended an ESL class at the local adult education center, she sat between a married Hmong woman and a married Hmong man because when the married woman's husband came to pick her up, he would accuse her of wanting to go to class to meet her boyfriend if she was seated next to the Hmong man. She told me that because of jealousy some men do not want their wives to study English in mixed classes and they prefer that their wives study in one-on-one tutoring situations with a female tutor. Stories such as this are common but hard to verify through observation. After having inquired about my own relationship status (ie., did I have a boyfriend), both male and female informants who know me personally have offered me the following advice: "never trust men".

COOPERATION BETWEEN PARENTS

In concluding my discussion of parents' roles and responsibilities it is important to mention that, while parents' roles are defined by gender, the Hmong expect the parents to cooperate with each other. Cooperation between a husband and his wife is highly valued in the Hmong family. The importance of a husband and wife cooperating and pooling their energies and resources in raising their family is reflected in the following statement made by a woman in her mid-forties: "Some people husband work, some people wife work. Some people both husband and wife work. Some people separate money if both work. Have two banks. I

don't like that. Split the rent, electricity...Sometimes, if I keep my money and he have to pay the bill, not fair."

A man who had been married for about forty years had this to say,

> "Husband and wife should help each other and be nice to each other. Say something do something nice to each other; agree together. Wife and husband should confer and agree before buying something. They should know what each other do, so will be life forever, long time. Listen to each other. If I go somewhere, if say will be gone for two days, after two days should come back. If want to stay longer, should send someone to tell will be gone a little longer."

This man's son modified his father's statement as follows to correspond more with their current situation in the United States: "If I go somewhere, if I say will be gone for two hours, if finish, should come back when finish. If I want to stay longer, in U.S. should make a phone call."

TRADITIONAL CHILD REARING

Bernatzik reported that parents treated their children equitably, but as a rule, they bestowed their affection on the youngest. I also observed that parents, grandparents and children alike were most demonstrably affectionate with the youngest children. Bernatzik noted that from earliest childhood, parents used punishment and reward as a means of education. Parents reprimanded disobedient children. Although he never saw a parent actually beat a child, he said that parents told him that if children up to age eight, continued to disobey after they were reprimanded, they would "get a beating along with references to their duties" (Bernatzik 1970:118). On the other hand, Bernatzik said, "a father may carve a small cross-bow, or...ask the blacksmith to make a small gun for his well-behaved son" (1970:118).

As far as teaching their children, Bernatzik remarked that imitation was the "basis of child rearing". He noted that parents instructed the children in religion and medicine as well as manners and good behavior (Bernatzik 1970:117-118). He also reported that parents showed an "indefatigable patience and good nature" in instructing their children. He said that parents considered children their "most precious possessions" (1970:117).

Much of what Bernatzik wrote still holds true for Hmong child rearing even today in the U.S. refugee communities. I have never seen a parent beat a child, nor did I see evidence that a child was beaten. In the six years that I have been involved in the Spokane Hmong community, I have only once observed even an inconsequential swat. Most children are very well-behaved. Parents still seem to have the "indefatigable patience and good nature in instructing their children", although, in some cases, they reported that they felt otherwise. (I discuss parents' frustrations around their children's behavior in more detail in the section of this chapter entitled "Frustrations and Problems Raising Children in the United States".) Role modeling is still the primary medium for Hmong children to learn what their parents expect of them.

Informants in this study perceived parents (along with older siblings and older relatives) to be role models for the children. As one informant put it: "I don't know about Americans, but, in our culture, we teach...the parents not to act in front of the children like fighting or arguing or say not nice words in front of children, so they only learn the best way. The parents teach them how to be grown up."

TEACHING CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

I asked all of the parents I interviewed what they thought was important to teach their children. Most parents told me what children were expected to do in Laos as well as what they were trying to teach them here. As children are growing up in the United States and attending American schools, they are breaking away from the traditional patterns of behavior that their parents and elders expect of them. This is causing friction in parent-child relations. Almost all of the parents expressed frustration that their children were not listening to what they told them. Many informants reported that it was easier to raise daughters than sons because daughters were more compliant and obedient than sons. A woman who has 7 children and three grandchildren summarized the situation as follows: "Our culture different. They [the children] learn American way. We [the parents] still use our way. So, it's hard for both parents and kids."

When asked what he thought was important to teach his children, a man in his sixties responded as the majority of parents did: "...teach them to be good: to obey the parents and elders. Teach them not to do bad things."

When asked what they considered bad things to be, most parents responded: stealing, being lazy, smoking, drinking, and not being respectful to parents or elders. Another bad thing was "ua loj leeb". One informant explained to me: "'ua loj leeb'...mean[s] always go out, like you don't have family. If you have family, but you go, go, go, go, you not coming back home, so that's mean 'ua loj leeb'."

It is interesting to note that the Hmong have a term for someone who rarely stays at home, and it has a negative connotation, but as far as I could find out, the language lacks a term for someone who stays home most of the time. English, of course, has the term "homebody" for someone who routinely stays home, and that term is used almost apologetically ("I'm just a homebody").[3] It distresses parents, particularly those of the "older generation", that as children get older they do not want to stay home. A woman whom I have known for several years told me that in Laos the family worked together, thus, they were together everyday. She told me that she felt sad because she and her children rarely spent time together any more. She said that they were gone at school and she at work during the day, and then, after school and on the weekends, when the whole family had free time, the children did not stay home; instead they would participate in school-organized sports activities. According to Hmong anthropologist Lee, it causes psychological stress to many Hmong to have household members going "...separate ways each morning [to different schools and workplaces,] while elders and the unemployed remain home with or without children to attend to" (Lee 1986:59).

DIFFERENTIAL TEACHING ACCORDING TO GENDER OF CHILD

Traditionally, boys and girls were taught to do different tasks. Many parents still differentiated between the tasks they expected of their sons and those they expected of their daughters. Below, a woman in her forties who has four children explains what parents taught their children traditionally:

> "Teaching the children. 7 to 8 years old. Boys different. Study first. Help mother, father do something hard. Girls: help mother with babies, help clean dishes, housework, help make needlework, with the fieldwork. Depends on the girls, the boys. They like to help the mother, father.
>
> When they grow up, they [should] know how to say when people come.
>
> After 13, 14, girls just under the mother, father. Usually, they say girls can't go [out]; boys can go more."

Another informant confirmed what the above informant said about education being preferred for boys, but what she said also reflects that newly educated parents were already making changes in the way they were raising their children even before they left Laos:

> "That's true that parents often times sent their sons to school, but not the daughters. But my father, he doesn't want to do that...My father, he is a teacher, so he let his children all go to school--the boys and the girls...He say all children is my children, everybody equal...So, he sid he wants everybody to know how to write, to learn how to read."

A mother in her early thirties told what boys and girls were taught to do traditionally:

> "In our country...the boy have the boy jobs, the girl have the girl job. The boy, his job in our country, like we have horses and maybe cow. So, he have to take care the cow and the horses. So, the daughter have to take care the pig because you have to feed the pig so you have to mix up the food for the pig...[girls go and get] the vegetables for the pig food. And the boy help to cut wood.
>
> So the daughter, cook and go get the water. And so, like easy one [chores] for the girl and hard one is for the boy because the boy is stronger.
>
> ...You know, in our country, every woman have to learn to cook very well before we get married because, not for you and your husband, you have to live with your mother-in-law and father-in-law and brothers and sisters, so you have to cook for the whole family...Not like this country, so when you marry you just read a cookbook. In our country, you have to learn.
>
> You know, our children, now we say you have to learn. So they say, 'No!'. So I say, 'Why? And when you get married you will have to--', and they say, 'No, you have cookbook [in the

United States].' They say, 'We have hamburgers, so you just drop the hamburger in, so you don't have to cook'."

Honesty was something that all parents surveyed thought parents should teach their children. A mother of four told me: "Don't lie to your children. [If] I tell you, 'After we clean the house, we'll go to the store' and then, if we don't go after done [and] I say, 'I'm too busy, next time we'll go', that's not right...That teaches the children not to trust you."

Most of the parents surveyed indicated in some way that it was important to teach children their place in the social hierarchy. The following statement made by a woman in her thirties reflects this in an indirect way: "In our culture we teach children how to respect the parents and listen what they said and not to do bad things. Like listen to parents, respect to parents, grandparents, the older brother, older sister, and the relatives." Some parents were more direct about it. A mother of four children said:
"In our country, children must under the parents...until they get eighteen." When I pressed one informant to explain what she meant when she said "children under the parents", she said,

> "Hmong parents control their children. American children control their parents. Hmong children under the parents.
>
> Here, children 18, they say, 'I'm 18, 16; you don't worry. I go, I know how to come back home myself.' I don't let them go, but they mad. I say go."

That woman's statement also reflects some of the problems Hmong parents are encountering as their children are growing up in the United States. I discuss those problems in detail in the following section.

Some parents also mentioned some of the negative aspects of the way parents traditionally raised their children. A woman in her sixties told me that she had raised her children very differently from the way her parents had raised her, and then she told me what she thought was not good about the way she was raised: "My parents treated the girls and boys different. Girls had to work, clean, so the boys could go to school. Boys eat first, girls eat what is left. Most Hmong did that."

Then she explained to me that if somebody came and brought a couple of elders to tell a man that their son wanted to marry the man's daughter (as was the traditional way to arrange a marriage), the girl's "father would give her to whoever asks" because it meant that "they respect him, so he doesn't think about the girl's desires". She added, "Not every case, but really common."

While virtually every parent surveyed thought that children should obey their parents, a father of two children in his twenties explained to me that he wasn't sure it was always a good idea for children to obey their parents: "...because that's why some girls got married at 14 or 15 years of age. They got married because they obey their parents." This may have been true in the past and it may still occur in a few cases in the United States, but none of the parents who I surveyed felt that it was a good idea for girls to get married at such a young age. In the

United States, the average ideal age parents stated for a girl to marry was 18, and for a boy it was 22.

The following statement made by a woman in her thirties reflects one other aspect of the traditional culture that concerned some female informants: children not getting free choice of a marriage partner in the traditional culture.

> "People raise their children [and can force the children to do what] they want. The harder way is like when they [the children] grow up they want to marry and sometimes they don't have their own choice, you know. Parents have decide. Some couple have their happy ending, but mostly not happy. They feel so bad about themselves and they say, 'If I get my own choice, then my life will be better than they tell me what to do.' If they got a good wife or good husband, then it's okay. If their wife or husband is not good, then they feel so bad about their relative and parents force them to marry."

Again, none of the parents I surveyed indicated that they would force their children to marry a partner of the parents' choice. When asked who they would like their son or daughter to marry, all parents indicated "whoever they like". One woman said: "I don't care [who they marry] because it's not my life. They have to choose their own." When asked if she wanted her children to marry Hmong persons, another female informant said, "Well, that's I don't know. Yeah. If I say Hmong, but they don't like Hmong, so if I say Amer...different kind of people, so they don't. It depend on them."

Some parents indicated, however, that they still would want to know the following things about their unmarried children's future spouses: "what people are they: what city and province are they from, who were their great-grandfathers and what they did in Laos". She said that the parents would verify that their children's potential spouses were not from the same clan. Traditionally, once a couple was married, parents would ask to find out whether there were any eligible boys or girls, so they could make more marriages between the two clans. Parents who are recent arrivals from the refugee camps may still make these inquiries, but parents whose children who have grown up in the United States are less likely to do so.

Informants indicated that their sons would still pay a brideprice for their wives. One woman said, "Yes, they will still do that. We can't change that." However, if their sons did not marry Hmong women, informants were less sure it would be necessary. When asked whether she expected that her family would pay a brideprice for her sons' wives, a mother of three boys answered: "Always...But, if he marries different people, I don't know that. But, if Hmong, yes." The average brideprice that parents expected their sons would pay was between $1500 and $3000.

CHANGES IN CHILD REARING IN THE U.S.

When asked what they felt was important to teach their children in the United States, most parents felt it was important to teach their children to finish school so they could get a good job. While parents

did not stipulate whether finishing school meant high school or college, if one looks at the age that most parents thought was a good age for youths to marry (22 for boys and 18 for girls), one can project that, in general, parents thought their daughters should finish high school and their sons should finish college. A father of 12 children told me:

> "Here, better way have children go to school, have good education...Here you need education to earn more money. So the one who don't have education have hard time. In the United States it's hard to have a farm...In Laos want to have a big farm for them or want kids to get good education. Selling things (merchandise), raising livestock and then selling it, ways to make money if they don't have a big farm."

In another case where I was interviewing two women, after one of the women told me what she thought was important to teach children, the other woman told her to tell me what she thought was important to teach her children here in the United States. She said with a tone of surprise in her voice as though what she was saying should be obvious to me: "My children grow up here, they look like American children. They know how to cooking, cleaning, wash clothes. Girls, boys play together. Go anywhere. They go fast. Know how to take care of themselves better than mother, father teach."

FRUSTRATIONS AND PROBLEMS CHILD REARING IN THE U.S.

All parents had stories of frustrations they were experienceing in raising their children in the United States. The primary cause of these frustrations is that the parents did not find support for their view of the family and of the hierarchies of respect and authority of parents within the family in the U.S. At the same time, their children who are growing up in the U.S. are receiving messages at school from their teachers, from their American schoolmates, from the parents of their American friends, and from American television that children have a more or less equal status with adults and that children have rights in the United States that they did not have in Laos. In many cases, the messages the children are getting from their parents do not concur with the messages they are getting from American society. I suspect that some children may be rebelling in the hopes of "reforming" their parents' attitudes, while other children resign themselves to living in one world while at home and another while they are in school or with their friends. In the meantime, the parents feel at a loss as to what to do. The most commonly cited problem was disobedience. One informant stated it as follows, "like I told them [my children] what to do and they don't want to do it".

That Hmong parents feel great frustration around this issue, is reflected in the following quotes.

A mother of 3 children who has lived here for 14 years had this to say:

> "The American children is too much freedom. So, like if I have my children, so I say, 'Please help me do this so this.' But they say, 'No.' I say, 'Why?' They say, 'My friend, his mother not do

like you tell us to do this do this.' But I say, 'No, you not American people.' [They say,] 'No, but we in American country.'

[In Laos,] most the children help the parents work at home. Not like this country, so they just...out. Because, like I have children you have children, so your children help you, my children help me. Nobody to have free time to play around. So, if my children come to play with your children, but your children no have time, so my children come back home. So, he knows, 'Oh, I must work, too, because my friend work help his parents, so I must help my parents, too.' So, everybody work, so that's easy.

Yes, and another thing, have TV, too. The children love to sit there and watch TV. In our country we don't have TV."

A mother of six children who has lived in the U.S. for 14 years said:

"Here is they not listen to you and they not respect you as like you are not their mother. They yelling at you; they not listen to you anymore and every time they want, you know, they never be home. Problem they watching TV too much. They don't help thing and sometime you tell them what to do and they yell at you. I don't know where they learn that. That's not the way I respect my parents. When I am children, I can't do that. Maybe they learn from TV.

The worst thing is they yell at you, they go with friends and they watching TV a lot. And they not listen to you, that's the big problem."

DISCIPLINING CHILDREN

Most parents told me that, traditionally, it was the father's role to discipline the children. Of the parents surveyed, a large majority (74%) agreed with the statement that it was the father's role to discipline the children. Those who disagreed were females mostly from the middle generation or males with four years of college in the United States. Only one of the females who disagreed is from the older generation. A slightly smaller majority (59%) agreed with the statement that a mother should leave the disciplining of the children to the father. Those who disagreed with the latter statement, again, were either female or males who were college graduates. This time, however, the female contingent that disagreed were split half and half from the older and middle generations.

When interviewing women from the older generation, several of them told me that it was the father's responsibility to discipline the children. In their cases, however, they reported that they had not left the disciplining of the children to their husbands because their husbands were not around or because they felt their husbands did not always discipline their children.

Most of the parents surveyed (85%) also agreed with the statement that it was the father's responsibility to discipline the sons and the mother's responsibility to discipline the daughters. Those who disagreed were either females from the middle generation who did not follow the traditional Hmong religion or were males with college

education. Parents told me: "Some, if the mother tells the sons what to do, sometimes they don't want to do, they won't answer." Statements made by mothers gave me the impression that as a son gets older he is more likely to ignore his mother when she tells him what to do. They explained that sons will relate to their fathers better since they are males, too. (This may be the result of the situation of boys seeking to carve out their niche as men, higher in the social hierarchy than women and, thus, could explain why a son might ignore his mother.)

The above information about the Hmong approach to disciplining children (that it is largely seen as the father's role to discipline and that fathers are responsible for disciplining sons, while mothers are responsible for disciplining daughters) is helpful in understanding changes that are occurring in Hmong parents' values in the U.S. In discussing how Hmong parents discipline their children for bad behavior or for disobeying, a number of Hmong parents told me that raising children was an easy task for parents back in Laos, but here, it has become one of the harder tasks. As one father put it: "In Laos, children under parents--most children obey; in U.S., most children don't obey."

Traditionally, parents' words carried considerable clout. When I asked one mother how her parents punished her back in Laos if she disobeyed, she said: "I couldn't disobey my parents". Then she added, "Most Hmong children, so if you say one time, so they not do again. If your mother or father tells you one time, 'Mary Kay, don't go there. I don't like you to go there', then you NEVER go. So, that's the way." A widowed mother of four children said that if her children disobeyed, she could insist that they obey her:

> "...[it's] important for [a] good mother to watch what they [her children] are doing and make sure they do things right, and if not, I have to tell them...If younger, tell them, 'Why you do that? Who will listen to you? I your mother, I really care about you. I know. I'm older. If I say wrong, it's VERY wrong to do that. If you don't listen to me, your life will be very hard.'
>
> If [the children] learn [when they are] younger, they older, they already know. If you wait till right now (her children are all in high school and older now), they know too many things. They won't obey.
>
> ...If [to your] children if you say no, [then you] have to say no all the way. My kids, if I say no, they have to not go and not keep asking."

As reflected in the above statement, the preferred way of disciplining children is to tell them what they have done wrong, explain to them why it was wrong and warn them of the undesirable consequences that might await them if they continue to misbehave. The largest majority of parents surveyed (89%) agreed with the statement to that effect.

For many children, fear of parents' disapproval and wanting to realize the desirable outcomes promised if they were good (or to avoid the undesirable consequences awaiting those who were bad) were enough to keep them in line. Also, it is important to remember that older children also held responsibility in watching their younger siblings. Thus, fear of being reported to parents was also a deterrant. A mother of six children describing life in Laos said, "If you don't obey your parents, then they are mad and they say you are not a good daughter or a good son...They have to say you don't do this, do this not good. You have to do what I [say]...see and look and listen for the good people--what they do and they be...and later [then you'll have a]...good marriage." Another woman told me: "My country, teens very shy to be lazy or smoke...or drink. If you younger and like that, can't get a husband at all".

Parents felt that children who refused to obey after having been told or were disrespectul towards their parents or elders had to be taught their place in the social hierarchy. Informants told me that in Laos parents usually punished such children by hitting them with a small stick (a "switch"). Informants who had been hit by a switch, had only one or two such stories to tell. Some parents punished their children by other means than hitting them. When I asked a woman in her fifties how her parents punished her, she told me that she had never been punished, but her brother had once. She said she did not know what he had done, but he had done something to another of her brothers which made her father very angry. She said her brother's punishment was that he had to do all of the farm chores by himself that night. None of the other children were to do their chores; they were "free" to do their homework from school, she told me. Her father allowed her brother to come into the house and do his homework only after he had finished all of the farm chores.

Two fathers explained to me that parents used different disciplining approaches depending on the child. One father said:

> "[Some children are] hard to teach because they don't follow. [Parents] say the good way, but they don't listen. Like Pao (author's note: the informant's 4-year-old brother), he likes to do what he wants--he doesn't listen.
>
> [With some children]...if you speak softly, they will listen. So you can teach them by speaking softly to them. If you speak harshly [to them], they get mad. [Other children, if you]...threaten to hit them, [that works], too. And they stop. [But with some children, you have to]...pick up a stick and hit them....[It] depends on the child."

The second father had a similar view: "Some kids, speak soft and they will do. Some kids, must use switch many times so they will not steal something. In Laos, if child steals from neighbors, neighbors come and tell you, and you hit your child, so never do again. If [your children] skip school or if come home late, first tell. Second [time], tell or hit him."

Most parents I interviewed believed that using corporal punishment or the threat of corporal punishment were acceptable ways to get a child to stop doing something if the child ignored the parents words. When asked whether she thought threatening to spank a child was a good way to discipline, one mother said this, "Yeah, maybe...because if you tell your children not to do that: "Next time you...do that I have to spank'. Yeah, so the second time so you say you promise, right? So, the second time...[the child does it] again, so maybe you have to [spank the child]. Yes, I think [so]."

A majority of parents surveyed (70%) felt that corporal punishment was an acceptable way to discipline children. Among those who disagreed were a female contingency with members from both the older and middle generations and a college-educated male. Parents from both the older and middle generations, and especially fathers, felt the best way to teach children to obey were the ways they (the Hmong) had always used. Those who were attempting methods they have learned about since coming to the United States were mothers and/or educated parents from the middle generation.

All parents were aware that corporal punishment is largely looked down upon now in the United States. I was amazed that nearly every parent I spoke with was aware that parents who spanked their children could get in trouble with authorities. The following two statements reflect parents' concerns about this issue. A woman who has been in the U.S. fourteen years said this: "Well, I don't know. And you cannot say something, you cannot hit the children; you cannot control them. That's too much freedom. You do something a little hard, they go to the school, and you get trouble. So, I don't know. But, in our country, children must under the parents. Until they get eighteen. Like they must do like parents say."

The mother of a pre-schooler said: "Even little children know that Americans really concern about child abuse. My daughter went to Head Start and she had a scratch on her face and she told her teacher that I did that to her. I didn't do that to her. I think maybe the cat scratch her. Like she knows too much."

A man who has been in the U.S for only two years said,

> "Now, only fall down and hurt; go to school, so teacher ask what happen--what he do (author's note: how did this happen to you?). Hard for parents so they children will obey them. Still young, fall down; hurt leg, hand, teacher asks. [It] makes the kids so they not afraid of the parents and they can do what they want. Kids have freedom. Parents doesn't have freedom."

Parents reported that in Laos the children received the same messages about obedience and respect from their teachers as they did from their parents and the society at large. One informant told me: "In Laos [children] 6 or 7 go to (start) school. No high school. No pre-school. Teacher can do like the parents, too." He told me that if a teacher saw one of his/her pupils misbehaving outside of the school premises and even after hours, the teacher could punish the child. This

would have been condoned because teachers were higher in the social hierarchy than pupils.

Having their children receive different messages in school from those they receive at home and having the understanding that they can not use corporal punishment with their children are two key areas where Hmong parents find adjustment to life in the U.S. most difficult. These issues are probably the place where Hmong parenting values are in the most conflict with parenting values of middle-class Anglo-Americans.

A woman in her twenties who has two pre-school age children and who has lived in the United States for 11 years said she had heard gossip: "Some caseworkers say that Hmong are abusing their children." Her response was this: "Hmong spank their children as a way of disciplining...they not abusing. [When] some Americans spank [their children], they really spank [them]."

When asked if they knew what child abuse was, all parents said they did. They often reported that they had heard of child abuse cases in the U.S. through the news or programs on TV or through their children. Most parents knew of or had heard of cases of parents abusing their children in Laos, but they all said it was not very common. One father said this about child abuse: "If some [parents] beat their kids, [they] should be under the police, too. [In Laos, we had] no law [regarding child abuse]; brother or uncle or relative will come and tell person not to do that or people will look bad [at the family]."

Many parents, especially those who have children growing up here, feel that if parents are not allowed to discipline their children by spanking them, their children will grow up out of control. Parents attributed the widespread problems of violence and bad behavior among youth in the United States to the lack of having been disciplined. They worry about the lack of any American cultural mechanism for holding children accountable for their behavior if parents are not allowed to punish them, and they worry about children manipulating the system to their advantage. One man put it this way:

> "In Laos, no have teenagers will go to do like they do in the United States--very few do that...[In the U.S.] can do anything by themselves. No have law for them. Not obey for the parents--can do anything like they want, do the wrong thing...under 18, no law for them. They can get things to eat for themselves, so they can do and [continue] to do [whatever they like]. Parents get in trouble for children."

Parents in the parent education/literacy program that I coordinated disagreed with the views of an American parent educator on parenting adolescents. The parent educator had illustrated the American view of parenting by saying that parents are like a dock and their children are like a boat. He said that just as a boat leaves the dock and returns, children will leave their parents and return. (This was a reference to the American parenting ideal of children leaving home when they finish school and then returning once in a while to visit.) He said while the boat is at the dock, we prepare it for its journey (implying that

parents need to prepare their children for their journey once they leave home).

The parents in the program strongly disagreed with this image of parenting. One student suggested that an image of a mother hen and her chicks would be a more appropriate metaphor. Hmong parents felt that it is important to teach their children that they are part of a family that can always be relied upon. In order for their mutual support system to function, they must depend on individual members doing their part in the cooperative venture. For that reason, the idea of a boat being prepared to go out to sea and returning when it feels like it did not sit very well with the Hmong parents in the parent education class.

DISCIPLINING STYLES OF THE "MIDDLE GENERATION"

Some parents from the middle generation who have been educated in the United States reported that they were raising their children very differently from the ways other Hmong parents raised theirs. These parents, however, appeared to get little emotional support from other Hmong parents. A social worker told me of one Hmong parent who had completed a P.E.T. (Parent Education Training) course, but the spouse of that parent refused to adopt the P.E.T. approach to parenting.

A few parents were critical of the old parenting styles and felt that older parents needed to adjust their values to the new environment in the U.S. One informant who reported that she is raising her children differently from most Hmong parents said this:

> "The parents see differently than the children. The children see something different--like my kids--they see something different. And I have to learn, I have to cope with them, you know, to balance the family. But for other Hmong people--well, for like my mother's generation, like my brother and sister--they still stay with my mother--and other Hmong families--the parents did not want to see what the children are seeing.
>
> ...I think that all the Hmong got so much problem with teenage and parents...They [parents] say how we do it is how you are going to do it. The children see how American parents treat their children differently than their parents treat them--like they say 'sorry', 'excuse me', 'I apologize', they play together, talk together, communicate to each other--and they [Hmong children] think that their parents are not good parents.
>
> Usually Hmong people don't do that, they don't talk to their children. The only time that they talk to their children is when they want them to do something. That's why I think this young generation gets into so much trouble with the parents. The parents think the children should obey them and stay home. This generation, they cannot do that. They want to go out to a movie, they want to go out play around, hang around just anywhere, you know."

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE UNITED STATES

Parents did not report cases of violence in the Spokane Hmong community, but pointed to examples in Minnesota and California. It

seems that most problems arise around the issue of discipline. An informant who went to high school in California said: "Here, they study hard; [In California], play too much. Party. Parents can't say anything...You cannot make them do what you tell them. I heard other people, the parents try to tell them what to do; they just took off. I heard some if parents tell them, they hit their parents...Here [kids] have too much freedom."

A parent from the older generation told me that recently while her nephews were visiting from California they told her that sometimes when their parents yelled at them they would just leave. They told her that they would go with their friends and hotwire a car and drive it for a while. Then, they would leave it somewhere and do the same thing with another car. They would drive all around like that until they got tired of it and then they would go back home. She said that she made them promise not to do that any more or next summer they could not come and visit her again.

An informant from the middle generation said: "Discipline, I think it's a problem when you cannot discipline, you know. Here you do not hear that much, but in California and Minnesota [people have] been killed because of [that]...".

That informant was referring to an incident where a Hmong youth was killed by his friend (another Hmong youth) in Minnesota. Apparently, some boys were going to rob a store. One boy shot one of the other boys when he refused to go along with the plan and take part in the robbery. The boys covered their victim with leaves to hide him. His body was not discovered for so long that dental records had to be used to identify him.

Later, one of the youths was jailed for the crime. One of my informants told me that when his mother (I was told the boy did not have a father) went to visit him in jail, he told her, "Mother, don't come and cry now. This is too late...Because then you don't help me when I was so young...you are able to discipline me, you don't do it...Because you don't discipline me that's why I get myself into this kind of trouble. Don't come and cry right now. You just go home. I don't want to see you."

I believe that informants told me about the above incident to illustrate how acute the problems are that Hmong parents are facing raising teenagers in the U.S.

Even though the parents expressed frustration at children's lack of respect for them in the Spokane community, the situation has not degenerated to violence against parents and youths being jailed for crimes . One woman put it this way, "But, at least the kids here don't go and do something crazy. They just hang around with their friends and stuff like that; they don't go crazy...Two [or] three kids in Minnesota they went and stole a car. They ran, so the police came and they ran and the police shot him in the back."

Parents considered the Spokane community to be a good place to raise children: because the Hmong community is small enough that the children are learning to speak English and there are not gangs of youths committing crimes. However, parents did fear that it may only be a matter of time before even their kids start "going crazy" as they see

youths who they do not trust coming to visit from California and Minnesota.

A mother of six kids, the oldest of which is in high school told me,

> "The scary thing...too many people afraid they go out a lot, they might go--[like they see on] TV--people drinking, smoking. [It] scare[s me] every time they go out...you [sic] worry about them until [they come back]...Like we say, 'Of war we are free--no communists now, you know, but not [free of] another [of other problems]--like alcoholic and killing things, crime--like too many."

CHAPTER 4 NOTES

1. When my informants spoke to me in English, I tried to keep their quotes as close to the original wording as possible without editing them or correcting their English. While I realize this might be misinterpreted as trivializing or infantilizing what my informants said, my intention is to make the reporting more realistic and to give the reader a flavor of the actual way my informants' speech sounded. There are certainly inconsistencies because some informants who speak very little English actually spoke in Hmong and either I or a Hmong person translated what they said. Because my proficiency in Hmong is nowhere near that of a native speaker, informants who spoke to me in Hmong had to simplify their language. When other Hmong people translated for me, I reported the language as closely as to how the translater spoke. Therefore, an informant with a very low proficiency in English might actually sound more fluent than a person who had a high enough proficiency level to express her/his ideas in English.

   Also, I have changed certain information in referring to informants, such as place names, to protect the privacy of my informants.

2. The term "family reunification" is explained in Chapter 3, in the section "Refugee Status". The term refers to the process whereby refugee families who have resettled in the United States go through the channels necessary to bring other family members to the community that they are living in.

3. The English term "gadabout", which applied almost exclusively to women, is now virtually extinct, presumably the result of cumulative changes in a culture that no longer expects women to stay at home.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. PARENT VALUES VARY BY EDUCATION LEVEL, FLUENCY IN ENGLISH, AND AGE OF PARENT

Traditionally, the Hmong culture defined kinship and gender and, thus, family roles, in a specific way in order to ensure the survival of the group. One's age, sex and kin relationships determined one's social and economic position in relation to the members of the rest of the group and proper behavior for interacting with people both within and without the group. In the social hierarchy that existed, the oldest generation held the highest status, and men held higher status than women. Children were subordinate to parents in the social hierarchy, so they were expected to obey and respect them as well as other elders. The traditional Hmong household restricted individual freedom, but also provided a considerable individual security within the group. Making the transition to the cash-based market economy of the United States is a major point of stress for the majority of the Hmong parents with whom I spoke. They were accustomed to a subsistence-level economic system based on kinship obligations where the extended family group worked together to raise food for the family in Laos.

Most of the Hmong parents with whom I spoke expressed values in line with those of the past when it came to gender roles and expectations for how children should behave. However, it became apparent that I was dealing with several Hmong views of the family. In talking with parents about their own and their children's roles in the family, and their concerns and problems encountered in raising their children in the United States, I found one group who expressed views in harmony with the Hmong family system as described in the published literature on the Hmong in Southeast Asia (Bernatzik 1970; LeBar, Hickey and Musgrave 1964; Yang 1975; Geddes 1976; Cooper 1984; Lee 1981, 1985, 1986), and another group whose views regarding gender roles and how to interact with children have changed in certain aspects. In general, the former group was made up of the older generation of Hmong parents and those with little or no formal education and who lacked fluency in English. The latter group was made up of the younger generation of Hmong parents and those who have more formal education and/or fluency in English. I referred to the latter group in this thesis as the "middle generation" because they were the middle generation of Hmong parents in the United States, between the oldest generations of parents and the youngest generation, who have essentially grown up in the United States. I referred to the former group as the "older generation" even though some of the people in this group may actually not have been from the oldest generation of Hmong parents.

The "older generation" of Hmong parents continues to employ strategies, similar to those they used in Laos, of family solidarity and cooperation to ensure and enhance their survival in the United States. Extended families cooperating in money-gathering ventures and living close enough to each other to facilitate cooperation and mutual assistance in day-to-day activities are two examples of "survival-enhancement" strategies they employ. Another survival strategy employed by parents with little or no education, limited skills

in English and a low level of job skills is the utilization of public assistance programs. Most parents from the older age-group whom I spoke with had not been able to obtain employment that paid above minimum wage, offered medical benefits or job security. Among the "older generation", there is little variation in outlook on family relations and obligations.

For the "middle generation"--generally speaking those who have become parents after leaving Laos--there appear to be two repertoires of values from which to draw in working out a strategy for survival in the cash-based economy of the United States. Members of the "middle generation" have some training under the kinship-based Hmong socio-economy of Laos, though their own personal circumstances may have changed, and they may not have spent many years living within the context of the traditional subsistence-level economy that their parents had. Because members of the "middle generation" also have some education and fluency in English and because they are young enough to "start over", they are able to forge survival strategies in the United States which are slightly different from those of their parents and older generations of Hmong parents. One strategy available to those who are eligible is enrollment in public assistance or financial aid programs, such as FIP or Track II, that permit them to acquire higher education and marketable job skills, while providing financial support for the family. Among this generation, one finds higher levels of employment and more variation in parenting values.

2. LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES CONCERNS MOST PARENTS

In the Spokane Hmong community, where the main problem in the American environment is a lack of financial resources, parents from both the "middle" and "older generations" demonstrate changes in their values when it becomes apparent that doing so will be advantageous to their family's economic well-being. However, parenting values are changing in different ways depending on the survival strategy of the parents and whether they are living below the poverty level[1]. The parents who report values that differ the most from the traditional Hmong parenting norms are those with the most education in the United States--ones who, therefore, can obtain jobs that pay them enough to support their families above the poverty level in the United States and those who have the most fluency in English.

3. PARENTS RECEIVE LESS CHILD-REARING ASSISTANCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Traditionally, parents had help in raising their children. In the Spokane community, I observed that grandparents, especially grandmothers, and older siblings continue to play an important role in providing childcare and in teaching young children what is expected of them. As a group, however, the parents in my study had less access to their parents for childcare assistance and could depend less on their older children for childcare assistance than their own parents and grandparents had. Nonetheless, they still attempted to make use of those resources for assistance in child-rearing as much as possible.

4. TRADITIONAL CHILD REARING AS RELATED TO PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Since parent educators now consider play to be such an important medium for parents to teach their children, I will discuss the place of play in traditional Hmong parenting values. Bernatzik remarked that:

> "from a young age the child has continued social contact all day long...I never saw a child going about by himself...as soon as children were 3 or 4 years old, they are admitted into the children's group. The composition of the children's group varies greatly and depends on which children have free time...[children's] activities during their free time are usually separated from those of the adults. No one stimualtes the children at play; at most they are watched with amusement, but never interfered with, and the play of children is by no means regarded as a useless activity. ...[Children] are made to work, but during their free time they are allowed to do as they please." (1970:91)

Most parents interviewed reported that they have more free time in the U.S. than they did in Laos, and that now they have more time to spend with their children. In this respect, educated parents, especially, are adopting parenting behaviors that middle-class Anglo-Americans consider to be proper ways for parents and children to interact. Whereas, traditionally, parents didn't have much leisure time to play with their children, 69% of the parents surveyed agreed with the statement that parents should play with their children, and 27% were unsure, while only 4% disagreed. When it comes to games, Bernatzik reported that "there are few games based on rules" among the Hmong, so board games may be a new phenomenon for Hmong parents who now spend more time playing with their children. I observed parents spending time reading to their pre-school age children, and children reading by themselves on numerous occasions during their free time. A large majority of parents surveyed (96%) agreed with the statement that parents should read to their children when they are small; however, many of the parents of the older generation of those parents that agreed also told me that while they agreed in principle with the statement, in reality, they didn't know how to read English.

5. PARENTAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIFFER BY GENDER

Hmong informants perceive parental roles as being different for males and females with the common goal being the welfare of the children. In most cases, informants perceived the mother's primary responsibility to be taking care of the children, while the father's primary role was to provide material and financial support for the mother and children. Mother's roles also included taking care of the husband's and parents' needs, and father's roles included assisting in the childcare of preschool-age children.

Traditionally, mothers were in charge of the education of daughters and fathers were in charge of educating sons. The father was supposed to discipline the children, especially the sons. Informants told me that usually the mother acted as the go-between in the communications between fathers and daughters. It was the father's role to deal with

the public domain. While my informants defined parents' roles by gender, they reported that the Hmong expect the parents to cooperate with each other. Honesty and trust between members of the family were highly valued by informants in this study. Also, as hospitality ranks high in value, both males and females were expected to be hospitable to guests.

It was in the area of gender roles that my informants' values reflected the most variation from traditional parenting norms. In most households I have observed that the mother or daughter(s) still prepare the meals; however, several informants reported teaching sons as well as daughters domestic chores, and expecting daughters as well as sons to learn skills that would enable them to obtain employment outside of the home.

6. PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF CHILDREN DIFFER FROM THOSE OF ANGLO-AMERICANS

When it came to what they felt was most important to teach their children, most informants in the Spokane community still differentiated between the tasks they expected of their sons and those they expected of their daughters. As children are growing up in the United States and attending American schools, they are breaking away from the traditional patterns of behavior that their parents and elders expect of them. This is causing friction and frustration in parent-child relations. Many informants reported that it was easier to raise daughters than sons because daughters were more compliant than sons. Most parents in this study felt that it was important to teach their children to finish school so they could get a good job. While informants did not stipulate whether finishing school meant high school or college, if one looks at the age that they thought was a good age for youths to marry (22 for boys and 18 for girls), one can project that, in general, they thought sons should attain a higher educational level than daughters.

Nearly all of the parents in this study expressed concern that the children in the United States have too much freedom. Those who most commonly expressed that concern were parents who had been in the United States the longest (10 to 14 years) and those who had school-age children. All parents had stories of frustrations they were experiencing in raising their children in the United States. The primary cause of frustrations related to child-rearing was that the parents do not find support for their view of hierarchies of respect for elders and authority of parents within the family in the United States. In the meantime, their children are receiving messages at school from their teachers, from their American schoolmates, from the parents of their American friends, and from American television that children have a more or less equal status with adults and that children have special rights in the United States.

7. THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN: DISOBEDIENCE SEEN AS A PROBLEM

I observed that parents, grandparents and children alike were demonstrably affectionate with the youngest children. Role modeling is still the primary medium for Hmong children to learn what their parents and families expect of them. Most children are very well-behaved.

Parents still seem to have the "indefatigable patience and good nature in instructing their children" that Bernatzik noted in the 1930's in a Hmong village in Thailand, although, in some cases they reported that they felt otherwise.

The preferred way of disciplining children is to tell them what they have done wrong, explain to them why it was wrong, and warn them of the undesirable consequences that might await them if they continue to misbehave. Many parents in this study reported that fear of parents' disapproval and fear of being reported to parents was enough of a deterrant to keep children obedient back in Laos. For children who refused to obey after having been told or who were disrespectful towards parents or elders, corporal punishment was usually resorted to. In Laos, that meant getting hit with a switch. Most parents I interviewed told me that disobedience of children was not a problem in Laos, while they saw disobedience as a major problem in the United States.

8. HMONG VIEWS DIFFER FROM THE DOMINANT AMERICAN VIEWS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Most parents believed that using corporal punishment or the threat of it were acceptable ways to get a child to obey. Parents from both the older and middle generation, and fathers more than mothers, felt the best ways to teach children to obey were the ways they (the Hmong) had always used. At the same time, all parents I spoke with were aware that corporal punishment is largely looked down upon now in the United States. Nearly every parent mentioned that they were aware that they could get in trouble with American authorities if they spanked their children. Having their children receive different messages in school from those they receive at home and the understanding that they cannot use corporal punishment with their children are two key areas in the rearing of children where Hmong parents find adjustment to life in the United States most difficult. They also represent the area where Hmong parenting values are in sharpest conflict with those of middle-class Anglo-Americans.

All parents with whom I spoke reported that they had heard of cases of child abuse in the United States through the news or programs on television or through their children. Most parents knew of or had heard of cases of parents abusing their children in Laos, but they all said it was not common. They said that if it did occur, the person who was abusive would be spoken to by males in the extended family and warned to curtail such behavior. Informants intimated that that pressure could be very great--as Bernatzik indicated, traditionally, the head of a household could go as far as killing a person who brought disgrace upon the family (Bernatzik 1970:51).

Most parents, especially those who have children growing up in the United States, worried that if parents are not allowed to resort to disciplining their children with corporal punishment when necessary, children will grow up out of control. Parents in this study attributed the widespread problems of violence and bad behavior among youth in the United States to the lack of having been disciplined. They worried about the lack of an American cultural mechanism for holding children accountable for their behavior if parents are not allowed to punish

them, and they felt frustrated that parents can be held accountable for the delinquency of their children. They believed that children manipulate the system to their advantage and they expressed that they (the parents) felt powerless to do anything to change that.

9. SOME HMONG PARENTS ARE CHANGING THEIR PARENTING STYLES

Only a minority of mothers and/or educated parents from the "middle generation" reported that they were attempting parenting methods that they have learned about since coming to the United States, in college classes or in parenting classes such as P.E.T. (Parent Education Training). However, they appeared to receive little emotional support from other Hmong parents. From the few parents who reported that they were raising their children differently from the ways Hmong parents normally raised children came criticisms of the traditional parenting styles. That minority felt that older parents needed to adjust their values to the new environment in the United States. They felt that it was important for parents to see the child's perspective, to learn to accept that the child's reality was different from what theirs had been, and to be more accommodating in the area of parent-child relations to the norms of middle-class Anglo-Americans (ie., to become more verbally expressive of feelings of approval and affection towards older children).

It is important to point out that the parents who said that they were raising their children differently from their parents and other Hmong people often had higher levels of proficiency in English and some marketable job skills, so they were not likely to be the same parents that were enrolled in parent education programs that served parents with low levels of formal education and literacy in English.

Even though parents expressed frustration at children's lack of respect for them in the Spokane community, they considered the community to be a good place to raise children: because the Hmong community is small, the children are learning to speak English, and there are not gangs of youths committing crimes. However, parents did fear that it may only be a matter of time before even their children start "going crazy" as they see youths whom they do not trust coming to visit from the larger Hmong communities of California and Minnesota.

CHAPTER 5 NOTES

1. According to the 1990 State of Washington Basic Health Plan, the federal poverty level is $16,980 annual income for a family of six. (The average family size in the Spokane Hmong community is 6 persons.)

CHAPTER 6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS SERVING HMONG AND OTHER REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT PARENTS

In the community in which this study took place, as is true in other communities with Hmong residents, Hmong parents are increasingly coming into contact with "parent educators" and, subsequently, with Anglo-American parenting values (mainly those of middle-class Americans) as they enroll their children or themselves in educational programs with parent education components as a form of early childhood intervention. Unbeknownst to Hmong parents,[1] the prevailing assumption of intervention programs has been that they (the parents) have inadequate parenting skills. Thus, the endgoal of the programs in which they are enrolled is to make the parents receptive to expert information and advice from professional parent educators and, ultimately to modify parent behavior and attitudes toward middle-class Anglo-American norms.

BASIC PREMISE NEEDED IN PARENT EDUCATION: AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE PARENTS

At the same time that Hmong parents are coming into contact with middle-class Anglo-American parenting values, the influence of the parents' own cultural values continues to be profound. Thus, a discussion of the many assumed functions of parent education classrooms is impossible without in some way touching on elements related to the cultural values of the parent. Planning of curricula, field trips, guest speakers, implementation of teaching and formulation of evaluative criteria can result in successful programs that meet the parents' and families' needs only if planners, administrators and implementers develop programs that are based on an awareness of the cultural forces active in the lives of the parents and families they intend to serve.

BEYOND THE DEFICIT MODEL: MODIFICATION OF EVALUATION CRITERIA TO REFLECT CULTURALLY PLURALISTIC IDEALS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

The premise that it is necessary to tailor programs so that they are "culturally-sensitive" has become at least a verbally accepted notion by those who administer and teach in early childhood intervention and parent education programs, and this line of thinking is clearly an improvement over the deficit model philosophy in early childhood intervention programs.[2] However, all too often, program funders have paid only passing attention to program participants whose cultural backgrounds differ from those of middle-class Anglo-Americans. Programs continue to measure parent success by whether they adopt behaviors similar to those idealized by middle-class Anglo-American parents.

The stated goals of the parent education program with which I worked demonstrate that little change has occurred in the philosophy of early childhood intervention programs in the past 25 years. On the one hand, the program performance standards laid out in the Request for Proposal (RFP) stated that "programs should be sensitive to the social, cultural, and ethnic differences of the participants, and should respond to those differences in the program design" (Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Office RFP 1988:3); yet, on the

other hand, the program goals and evaluation forms that the program was required to submit to the funding agency reflected an assumed deficit in the parenting skills of program participants. The stated "overall goal" of the program was "to enhance the ability of illiterate and semi-literate parents to support their children in the learning process" (Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Office RFP 1988:2). The following statements--"Increased proficiency in the basic skills and knowledge of child development [theories based on studies conducted with white, middle-class European or American children] will raise parents' self esteem and increase their confidence in their ability to provide their children with a positive, supportive environment" and "Such an environment enhances the performance of the[ir] children in formal educational settings"--reflect the assumption of deficiency in the parents (Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Office RFP 1988:2). Those statements imply that the program participants will have low self esteem. Furthermore, the evaluative criteria implied that the program participants' knowledge of parenting skills needed improvement. For example, in the report forms that the funding agency required to be submitted on a quarterly basis, the program coordinator was to evaluate how much the program participants' knowledge of parenting skills had improved and to provide quotes from students and classroom anecdotes as evidence of claimed improvements.

In the community where I conducted this investigation, low self esteem in parents was apparent only in Anglo-American dominated social and educational settings. Also, Anglo-Americans unfamiliar with Southeast Asian cultures, such as that of the Hmong, easily mistake behavior that is culturally appropriate for Asians, such as showing deference and respect to teachers and a general deprecation of one's abilities, for low self esteem, especially when low self esteem is what they expect to find. In the Anglo-American community, self esteem is an individual matter; for Southeast Asian refugees, as Dr. Tuan Nguyen of San Francisco's Department of Public Health remarked, "self-definition may be much more community-oriented...their 'I' is not 'I' and 'you' is not necessarily 'you,'" (quoted in Krich 1989). Thus, their sense of self esteem may also be more community-oriented.

If we accept that Hmong parents have carried their cultural patterns concerning the family and the household from Laos and have socialized their children with those cultural values to a greater or lesser degree, that Hmong families are a part of a nation-wide Hmong kin-based support network in the United States, and that their cultural values operate unavoidably and insistently in their educational processes, but then we ignore all of those cultural factors and assume that the parents' traditional parenting behaviors are unacceptable when it comes to evaluating their performance in parent education classes, then the curriculum is "culturally-sensitive" in name only.

In sum, culturally-sensitive program designs are needed to provide for alternatives to the deficit model of parent functioning; however, the parent education field must also seriously consider the cultural backgrounds of the parents in setting program goals and evaluative criteria for parent education programs. Program goals and evaluative criteria based on the deficit model undermine the cultural sensitivity

of the curriculum. Parent education programs need to adjust their goals and evaluative criteria if they want to become truly culturally sensitive. Finally, parent educator programs need to identify whether it is possible to carry out their goals and evaluative criteria and, at the same time, remain culturally sensitive. I have yet to see a program that describes how parents might keep their traditional practices and accept mainstream American practices when the two are in direct opposition with each other.

PROVIDING PARENT SUPPORT INSTEAD OF PARENT INDOCTRINATION

Recently, Douglas Powell (1988) summarized the evolution of development in parent education programs. In the eighties, he found that the focus on parents has not decreased in educational programs for parents of "at-risk" children. However, the new trends in the field are towards individualizing programs to match the parents' needs and characteristics (designing "culturally-sensitive" programs); allowing parents to have input into the scope and content of services they receive from the program; and to allow programs to serve as social support groups rather than education classes (Powell 1988:5-13). Powell notes that there are two variants of the parent/family support approach:

> "In one strand, it is assumed the provision of support is sufficient in and of itself for enhancing parent behavior and attitudes...The program does not attempt to move the parent toward a predetermined image of what the ideal parent should do with children; rather the intent is to offer support for the parent's existing beliefs and behaviors...In the other strand, the existence of support is viewed as a requisite condition for the parent's receptivity to expert information and advice. That is, it is assumed that needs in the family's environment (e.g., no nearby extended family and friends; inadequate food and housing) create stresses that preempt parents from attending to the information and pedagogical demands of the parent education program (Powell 1988:13).

One of the ways parent education classes can provide parent support instead of indoctrination is for parent educators to identify the main concerns in the lives of the parents from the parents' perspectives. With my experience in a parent education program, I found that it was only possible to provide instruction that was relevant and interesting to the parents after first identifying the primary concerns of parents from their own perspective.

It is instructive to note that the reason parents attended the parent education/literacy program that I coordinated was not that they wanted to increase their knowledge of the Anglo-American view of child development or their confidence in their ability to provide their children with a positive, supportive environment. The Hmong parents wanted to increase their knowledge of English and basic arithmetic skills so that they could find jobs and provide financial support for their children. The parents in the parent education/literacy program I coordinated, through their participation in the Spokane Hmong community,

had access to the traditional support network of the extended family and also to Hmong social workers. They attended the program because it was an integral part of a survival strategy: that of learning English and survival skills for the American environment; and because the program provided transportation and daycare for their infants and toddlers.

After identifying the primary concerns of the parents by listening to what they have to say, parent education programs can then best assist parents by heeding their requests in the educational curriculum. Allowing the parents to have input into the scope and content of the services they receive from the program makes little difference if their input is ignored. One of the problems that parent educators face is that funding sources often restrict the scope and content of services they allow programs to offer, thus restricting program curricula to topics that impose middle-class Anglo-American values.

Programs that are successful are those that meet the refugees' needs. A successful parent education program based on the expressed needs of refugee parents in the program I coordinated would provide assistance with such basic needs as finding adequate, affordable housing and transportation, financial assistance or employment, and instruction in English, arithmetic, and other survival skills. Only when the program curriculum is relevant to the parents' perceived needs, will the parents perceive the programs as being a success.

Parent education programs need to respect the parents' cultural values and family traditions. As Diana Li-Repac, director of a mental health clinic that provides services to Asians in Alameda County, California, pointed out, "Refugee parents often see American culture as being too permissive, so there's a great deal of parent-child conflict" (quoted in Krich 1989). One way that parent education programs can respect parents' cultural values is by accessing existing support networks in the parents' ethnic community. Cooperating with mutual assistance networks rather than working independently of them allows parent programs to utilize support networks that are often already in place. Also, programs working independently may be imposing Anglo-American models of support that actually undermine ethnic support networks and create chaos for parents rather than support.

If parent education programs aim to challenge parents' belief systems and focus on inter-generational conflicts, rather than recognize positive features of the Asian parents' cultures, such as the strength of families, the tremendous community support and cooperation between families, the emphasis on hard work and discipline that enables many Asian parents to maintain self respect, they are not likely to be worthwhile to Hmong and other Asian refugee parents.

The American family itself is currently facing major problems. Given the high divorce rates, high rates of alcoholism and drug abuse by both parents and children, teenage pregnancy, suicide, domestic violence, etc., it is difficult to imagine that Hmong parents should want to give up the strengths of their family traditions and assimilate middle-class Anglo-American parenting norms. The job of parent educators should not be to accustom Hmong parents to the problems of Anglo-American families. As Evelyn Lee, a mental health professional at the Alameda County clinic who was raised in a Chinese refugee family put

it, "We don't want to create more popcorn—those little yellow kernels that, under pressure, turn white. We mustn't complete a genocide by forcing people to give up their identities." (quoted in Krich 1989)

CHAPTER 6 NOTES

1. It is my belief that the implications I discuss in this section hold true for refugee and immigrant parents of cultural backgrounds other than that of the Hmong. While I do not state it, every time I use the word Hmong in this section, I could also have added the names of other refugee and immigrant groups.

2. Numerous articles have been published regarding the inappropriateness of the assumption of deficiency in the home environment of poor children (Baratz and Baratz 1972; Bernstein 1972; Valentine and Stark 1979; Zigler 1979; Powell 1988). That assumption led to the inclusion of parent education components in early childhood intervention programs. Douglas Powell from the Department of Child Development and Family Studies of Purdue University describes the evolution of the use of parent education in early childhood intervention programs in his recent book Parent Education as Early Childhood Intervention. Below, I briefly summarize Powell's description of that evolution.

In the 1960's the early childhood intervention movement held a core assumption that poor (the term the movement used was "disadvantaged") children came from "deficient" home environments. The prevailing attitude of the parent education field was that poor parents were deficient in regards to their attitudes towards achievement, their verbal interactions with their children, and their organization and the predictability of their home environments. The prevailing assumption in the field of parent education was that if it gave parents information and skills in rearing their children when they were still young, their children would then be able to do better in school, acquire skills that would make them employable, and eventually find work that paid above poverty wages. As the assumption went, it saw the deficiency of poor parents leading to the deficiency of their children. In that manner, parent education philosophy blamed the attitudes of poor parents for being the cause of their poverty and, ultimately, for continuing the "cycle of poverty", as it was called. (Powell 1988:2-5)

As Powell states: "This prevailing assumption about the family became known as the deficit model and...increasingly was criticized as an inappropriate premise of early intervention" (Powell 1988:2). "The early childhood intervention movement of the sixties perpetuated a tradition, evident in such earlier causes as the settlement house movement (Levine and Levine 1970), where the presumed superior character and world view of mainstream society was to be passed on to less advantaged people" (Powell: 1970:3). In the 1970's, the focus of program models shifted towards parents as primary recipients of services (Powell 1988:4).

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APPENDIX A: PARENT SURVEY (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Cov Teeb Meem rau Niam Txiv (Questions for Parents)—Revised Edition (9/3/90)

1. Children should obey their parents. (It is important that children obey their parents.)

2. Children should help take care of their younger siblings. (It is important for children to help take care of their younger siblings.)

3. Children should support their parents when the parents get older.

4. Children should respect their parents, grandparents, and elders.

5. Parents should be friends to their children.

6. Parents should speak softly (nicely) to their children. (Parents should show affection to their children).

7. It helps if parents play a lot with their children. (A parent should play with his/her child[ren].)

8. It helps if grandparents play a lot with their grandchildren. (Grandparents should play with their grandchildren.)

9. It helps if parents read to their children when they are young. (A parent should read to his/her child(ren) when they are small.

10. Parents have the responsibility (right) to discipline their children until they are old.

11. The mother's job is to discipline (teach/punish) the daughters; it is the father's responsibility to discipline (teach/punish) the sons.

12. The mother must raise the children more than the father. (It is the mother's responsibility more than the father's to take care of the children.)

13. The father must discipline (teach/punish) the children more than the mother.

14. The mother should give the right/responsibility of disciplining (teach/punish) the children to the father. (The mother should leave the disciplining of children to the father.)

15. Parents should leave it to children to heal/arrange their issues themselves if they are not hitting each other. (Parents should let

children settle their own disputes as long as their actions are not physically dangerous to each other.)

16. The way of teaching/disciplining/punishing children is a good way to teach children. (Corporal punishment should be used to discipline children.)

17. The way of criticizing is a good way to make children come to make the good way according to what people expect of them. (Criticizing is an effective way to bring children into line with your expectations of them.)

18. Praising is a good way to teach so that children do what one wants. (Praising in an effective way to bring children into line with your expectations of them.)

19. The way of disciplining/teaching/punishing without hitting children and talking to them are good ways to teach children. (Reasoning with children is a good way to discipline them.)

20. Telling a young child that s/he will be given away or telling an older child that s/he will have to leave home and family is an effective way to discipline a child.

21. Parents should train their children so that they know that they are good people; they will then know be able to follow after (where) their heart sends (them). (Parents should encourage their children to be self-confident.)

22. Parents should teach their children so that they know that they can create, that they know how to do/make (things), so that they have ability. (Parents should encourage their children to be creative.)

23. Parents should teach their children so that they want to know new things, new ideas, and that they must ask questions. (Parents should encourage children to be curious.)

24. Parents should teach their children so that they can be independent.

25. Parents should teach their children so that they know that they must be honest.

26. Parents should start to hold their children as guilty (for their misbehavior) at what age? (Children should not be disciplined until they are _____ years old.

27. Children are not able to know what is right and what is wrong until they are _____years old.

28. When children are _____years old, they can then start helping their parents with work.

****

Your clan name:

Year you were born:

You came to this country which year?

You are a mother or a father?

How many children do you have? How many daughters: How many sons:

How many children is a good number to have?

How long did you study in Lao?_____In the US?_____In France?_____

Do you still believe in the "spirits"? (Do you still follow the traditional Hmong religion?)

Where are you from (name of village, state) in Laos?

PARENT SURVEY--HMONG VERSION

Cov Teeb Meem rau Niam Txiv (Parent Survey)--Revised Version

1. Cov me nyuam yuav tsum mloog niam txiv lus thiaj yuav zoo.

2. Cov me nyuam yuav tsum pab saib xyuas, pab zov cov kwv yao thiaj yuav zoo.

3. Cov me nyuam yuav tsum pab txhawb cov niam txiv thaum lawv laus lawm.

4. Cov me nyuam tsim nyog muab cov niam txiv pog yawg thiab cov laus saib hlob.

5. Niam txiv yuav tsum ua phooj ywg nrog rau cov me nyuam.

6. Niam txiv tsim nyog yuav hais lus mos mos rau cov me nyuam.

7. Nws yuav pab tau yog niam txiv nrog cov me nyuam ua si ntau.

8. Nws yuav pab tau yog pog yawg nrog cov me nyuam ua si ntau.

9. Nws yuav pab tau yog niam txiv twm ntawv rau cov me nyuam mloog thaum lawv tseem me.

10. Niam txiv muaj cai saib xyuas thiab qhuab qhia cov me nyuam mus txog hnub lawv laus.

11. Tus niam lub luag hauj lwm yog qhuab qhia cov ntxhais: tus txiv lub luag hauj lwm yog qhuab qhia cov tub.

12. Tus niam yuav tsum tu cov me nyuam ntau dua tus txiv.

13. Tus txiv yuav tsum qhuab qhia cov me nyuam ntau dua tus niam.

14. Tus niam yuav cia rau tus txiv qhuab qhia cov me nyuam.

15. Niam txiv yuav tsum cia cov me nyuam sib kho lawv cov teeb meem yog hais tias lawv tsis sib ntaus.

16. Niam txiv tsim nyog ntaus cov me nyuam yog lawv ua tej yam txhaum qhia rau lawv.

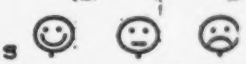
17. Kev thuam yog ib txog kev zoo ua rau cov me nyuam los ua txog kev zoo rau li neeg lub siab.

18. Kev qhuas cov me nyuam yog ib txog kev uas qhias kom cov me nyuam ua li yus nyiam.

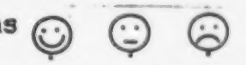
19. Kev qhuab qhia (txhob ntaus) cov me nyuam thiab kev hais yog ib txog kev zoo qhia rau cov me nyuam.

20. Kev hawv yuav muab tus me nyuam pub rau lwm tus yog muab ncaws tawm tsev tsis tau rov qab los yog ib txog kev zoo qhia rau cov me nyuam.

21. Niam txiv tsim nyog yuav qhuas rau cov me nyuam paub hais tias lawv yog ib tug neeg zoo; lawv thiaj li yuav ua tau raws lawv siab xa.



22. Niam txiv tsim nyog yuav qhuas rau cov me nyuam paub tias lawv paub tsim, paub ua, yam lawv ua taus.



23. Niam txiv tsim nyog yuav qhia rau cov me nyuam paub tias lawv xav paub yam tshiab lub tswv yim tshiab, lawv yuav tsum nug.

24. Niam txiv tsim nyog yuav qhia rau cov me nyuam paub tias lawv ua tau ywj siab ywj ntsws.

25. Niam txiv tsim nyog yuav qhia rau cov me nyuam paub tias lawv yuav tsum ua siab dawb.

26. Niam txiv yuav tsum pib rau txim rau lawv cov me nyuam txij thaum hnub nyug pes tsawg? _____

27. Cov me nyuam tsis tau paub qhov ua yog thiab tsis yog thaum lawv muaj _____ xyoo.

28. Thaum cov me nyuam muaj _____xyoo, lawv mam li pib pab niam txiv ua hauj lwm.

****

Koj lub xeem:

Koj tuaj qhov twg tuaj? Lub xeev twg:_____

Lub zos twg:_____

Koj yug xyoo twg?

Koj tuaj teb chaws no xyoo twg?

Koj mus kawm ntawv pes tsawg xyoo tom Nplog teb?_____

tom Milika teb (USA)?_____

tom Fabkis teb?_____

Koj yog niam los txiv? _____

Koj muaj pes tsawg tug me nyuam? _____

Pes tsawg tus ntxhais?_____ Pes tsawg tus tub? _____

Ib yig neeg muab pes tsawg tus me nyuam thiaj yuav zoo?_____

Koj tseem coj dab los coj dab? _____

APPENDIX B

LIST OF CONCEPTS WHICH PRESENTED DIFFICULTY IN TRANSLATION AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

TO BE AFFECTIONATE OR TO SHOW AFFECTION "hais lus mos mos" (to speak softly to).

TO BE AGGRESSIVE AND TO SHOW DEFIANCE TOWARDS OLDER CHILDREN, PARENTS "ntaus cov hlob cov laus txhav khoom thiab hais lus phem thiab ua si li lawv nyiam" (to hit older [siblings], elders, to grab things and to speak bad words and to play the way they like).

CREATIVE "paub tsim, paub ua" (to know how to create, to do/make).

CRITICIZING "kev thuam" (the way of speaking against, criticizing).

CURIOUS "xav paub yam tshiab, lub tswv yim tshiab, thiab tsis ntshai nug" (to want to know new things, new ideas, and not afraid to ask).

TO DISCIPLINE "qhuab qhia" (to teach by disciplining) This term may or may not include the concept of corporal punishment. Heimbach lists the meanings of "qhuab" as "to discipline, to punish, to teach by discipline, to train". Since corporal punishment was commonly used in Laos, my informant suggested that I translate "corporal punishment" as "kev qhuab qhia" (the way of teaching by disciplining); the term used for "reasoning with children as a way of disciplining" as "kev quab qhia (txhob ntaus) thiab kev hais" (the way of teaching by disciplining without hitting and by speaking to).

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES "niam txiv kev tswj hwm (me nyuam)" (mother father path manage protect [children]).

PRAISING "kev qhuas" (the way of praising, speaking of the good of another).

TO PUNISH "qhuab qhia" (see "to discipline" above) or "rau txim rau" (to hold one responsible for one's offenses, and, thus, liable for punishment).

SELF CONFIDENT, HIGH SELF ESTEEM "paub hais tias yus yog ib neeg zoo; yus thiaj li yuav ua tau raws yus siab xa" (to know that one is a good person; one will then be able to follow [where] one's heart sends).

NOTE ABOUT SELF ESTEEM: My key informant told me that, normally, if a person knows how to do something, s/he will not offer that s/he knows how, if asked. Also, a Hmong person will tend to diminish her/his abilities and talents. Among the Hmong, another person may speak highly of another person's talents; however, if that person is present, s/he should diminish what the other person has said about her/him. A person who speaks highly of her/his abilities is considered to be arrogant.